

Understanding Asthma

Asthma is a lung disease that makes it hard to breathe. People with asthma have sensitive breathing tubes. These tubes react to common, everyday things called *triggers*. Inhaling a trigger causes the airways to swell, tighten, and become inflamed. This is called an *asthma attack*. Learning how to manage your asthma can make attacks happen less often and can help you live a healthy lifestyle.



Asthma Triggers

When you have an asthma attack, you might wheeze, cough, feel short of breath or have chest pain. Asthma attacks often start with a trigger. Triggers may appear indoors or out. Here are some common ones:

- ✓ Pollen
- ✓ Dust
- ✓ Mold
- ✓ Smoke
- ✓ Pet hair
- ✓ Bugs
- ✓ Weather changes
- ✓ Exercise
- ✓ Stress or excitement



Managing Asthma Attacks

The best way to manage your asthma is to stop attacks before they happen. Find your triggers and try to avoid them. You can also ...

- ✓ Use special air filters in your home
- ✓ Buy special covers for your bed and pillows
- ✓ Stay away from people with colds
- ✓ Learn about controlled breathing



Working with your Doctor

Your doctor is your best partner for managing your asthma. They will tell you about any medication you may need and how to use it correctly. Your doctor can also help you make an Asthma Action Plan (see page 3).

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Asthma Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Being told that you have asthma can seem overwhelming, but your doctor can help. Here are some questions you can ask about your asthma. There's also space at the bottom to write any other questions you may have. Don't forget to take this sheet and your Asthma Action Plan with you to your next doctor appointment.

Understanding Asthma:

- What is asthma? What causes it?
- Will my asthma go away?
- How can I find my triggers?

How do I know when I am going to have an asthma attack?

- What should I do if I have an asthma attack?

Treating Asthma:

- What medicine(s) should I use for my asthma?
- What is an inhaler/spacer/nebulizer? How do I use it?
- How do I keep my inhaler/spacer/nebulizer clean?

Managing Asthma:

- How can I safely exercise with asthma?
- What is an Asthma Action Plan?
- What is a peak flow meter?

My Questions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Source: cdc.gov/asthma, nhlbi.nih.gov

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