



Asthma Care

What is asthma?

Asthma is a medical condition that affects the airways (the breathing tubes that carry air into our lungs).

From time to time, people with asthma find it harder to breathe in and out, because the airways in their lungs become narrower – like trying to breathe through a thin straw. At other times their breathing is normal. There is no cure for asthma, but it can usually be well controlled.

Most people with asthma can stay active and have a healthy life.

More details: [National Asthma Council](#)

The most common symptoms of asthma are:



Wheezing – a high-pitched sound coming from the chest while breathing



A feeling of not being able to get enough air or being short of breath.



A feeling of tightness in the chest.



Coughing

You don't have to have all these symptoms to have asthma.

Asthma symptoms can be triggered by different things for different people. Common triggers include exercise, cigarette smoke, colds and flu, and allergens in the air (e.g. grass pollen)



How is asthma treated?

Medicines are essential for managing asthma. Everyone with asthma should have their own up-to-date written asthma action plan by the GP with instructions on what to do when symptoms worsen. Good asthma care also involves treatment for other health conditions that can affect asthma. A healthy lifestyle helps people with asthma stay in control of their symptoms and feel well.

The main aims of asthma treatment are:

- to keep lungs as healthy as possible
- to keep symptoms under control
- to stop asthma from interfering with school, work or play
- to prevent flare-ups or 'attacks'

Medication

The two main types of asthma medicines are **relievers and preventers**.

Every child, adolescent or adult with asthma needs to have a reliever inhaler available at all times, so they can use it straight away if they have asthma symptoms.

Most adults and adolescents, and some children, also need to take preventer treatment to reduce their risk of flare-ups (attacks). Most preventers contain inhaled corticosteroids – a type of medicine that reduces inflammation inside the lungs. Some other medicines (e.g. prednisolone tablets) are used for severe asthma flare-ups. Asthma cannot be safely treated without medicines – a severe flare-up (attack) could be fatal.

What is an asthma action plan?

An asthma action plan is a set of instructions for managing your asthma or your child's asthma.

The plan is made by you and your doctor together, and then written down for you to keep.

An asthma action plan includes:

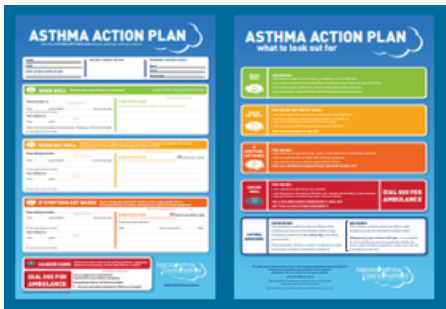
- a list of the person's usual asthma medicines, including doses
- instructions on what to do when asthma is getting worse, when to take extra doses or extra medicines, and when to contact a doctor or go to the emergency department
- what to do in an asthma emergency
- the name of the doctor or other health professional who prepared the plan
- the date.

Everyone with asthma (all children and adults) should have their own, personalised asthma action plan. Asthma action plans should be checked and updated at least once a year. Bring your action plan or your child's action plan whenever you visit your doctor.

More information

National Asthma Council
Australia's website has more
information about asthma
action plans

Visit: [Asthma Action Plan](https://www.nacasthma.org.au/asthma-action-plan)



What could make asthma worse?

Asthma symptoms can flare up due to:

- colds or flu
- exercise
- cigarette smoke
- outdoor and indoor air pollution (e.g. traffic, smoke, house cleaning products)
- cold, dry air
- allergies (e.g. allergy to animals, dust mites, mould or pollens)
- medicines that you are taking for another condition (e.g. some blood pressure-lowering medicines).

Asthma can be harder to control for people with other medical conditions like allergic rhinitis (hay fever), gastro-oesophageal reflux disease, or obesity.

What you need to know about your asthma care?

Make sure you can answer all these questions about your asthma. If you're not sure, ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

- Is my asthma action plan up-to-date?
- When should I use each asthma medicine (and how much)?
- Am I using my inhaler the correct way to get the most benefit from the medicine?
- What are the possible side effects of my medicines?
- How should I keep track of my asthma symptoms?
- What else can I do to avoid asthma symptoms or flare-ups?
- What should I do if my asthma symptoms get worse?
- Are my asthma prescriptions up-to-date?
- What should I do in an asthma emergency?
- When is my next asthma check-up

4 STEPS OF ASTHMA FIRST AID



1

Sit the person upright



2

Give **4** separate puffs of blue/grey reliever puffer

- Shake puffer
- Put **1** puff into spacer
- Take **4** breaths from spacer

Repeat until 4 puffs have been taken

Remember: **shake, 1 puff, 4 breaths**

OR give 2 separate doses of a Bricanyl inhaler (age 6 & over)
or a Symbicort inhaler (over 12)



3

Wait **4** minutes

If there is no improvement, give **4** more
separate puffs of blue/grey reliever as above

OR give 1 more dose of Bricanyl or Symbicort inhaler



4

If there is still no improvement dial
Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance

Keep giving **4** separate puffs every **4**
minutes until emergency assistance arrives

OR 1 dose of Bricanyl or Symbicort every 4 minutes –
up to 3 more doses of Symbicort

Call emergency assistance immediately. Dial Triple Zero (000):

- If the person is not breathing.
 - If the person's asthma suddenly becomes worse, or is not improving.
 - If the person is having an asthma attack and a reliever is not available.
 - If you are not sure if it's asthma.
 - If the person is known to have anaphylaxis – follow their Anaphylaxis Action Plan, then give Asthma First Aid.
- Blue/grey reliever medication is unlikely to harm, even if the person does not have asthma.

Protect yourself this pollen season.
Managing asthma and allergies matters.
Visit asthmaaustralia.org.au or call
1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 462) for more information.

