

Breathing Easier



Issue 1, 2021

Using an **Asthma Action Plan**

If you or your child has asthma that requires daily treatment, it is important to have an asthma action plan. An asthma action plan is a written plan that tells you what asthma medicine to take every day and how to treat an asthma attack. It can help you make quick decisions in case you are not able to think clearly during an attack.

An asthma action plan usually includes:

- Treatment goals, including your personal goals about your asthma
- An outline of your daily medications
- An asthma diary to keep track of your symptoms, triggers, and other things that can help you manage asthma
- Steps to take and medicines to use to treat an asthma attack early, before it becomes severe
- What to do if an attack becomes an emergency, and where to get medical treatment

Develop Your Plan

- Work with your doctor to make an asthma action plan for you or your child. An action plan is based on zones that are defined by your symptoms, your peak flow, or both. There are three zones: **green**, **yellow**, and **red**. Your action plan tells you what to do when you are in each zone
- Let your doctor know what you want regarding asthma care. For example, if you are not sure how to use your inhalers, tell your doctor
- If you make an asthma action plan for your child, give a copy to the child's school or caregivers and make sure they know how to use it

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Contact Us

1-866-942-7966
Monday–Friday,
8:30 am–5:00 pm
TTY: 1-800-662-1220

We Value Your Opinion

Please fill out a brief, anonymous survey at **mvplistsens.com**.

All responses are 100% confidential and help create a better experience.

MVP Health Care offers a health management program for members living with asthma. For more information or to see if you qualify, call **1-866-942-7966**. MVP's program is based on a collaborative guideline (including the NYSDOH, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, professional organizations, MVP and other health plans from across the state) derived from the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Third Expert Report Clinical Guideline for the Diagnosis, Evaluation, and Management of Adults and Children with Asthma. Information in this newsletter does not constitute medical advice. If you have questions about your health, talk to your doctor.

Health benefit plans are issued or administered by MVP Health Plan, Inc.; MVP Health Insurance Company; MVP Select Care, Inc.; and MVP Health Services Corp., operating subsidiaries of MVP Health Care, Inc. Not all plans available in all states and counties.

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Asthma Action Plans for Kids

MVP mails asthma action plans over the summer for kids to have for the new school year. Keep an eye out!

Follow Your Daily Treatment, and Use The Asthma Action Plan

- Take your daily medicines to help minimize long-term damage and avoid asthma attacks
- Check your peak flow regularly if your doctor recommends it. This can help you know how well your lungs are working
- Check your action plan to see what zone you are in
 - If you are in the **green zone**, keep taking your daily asthma medicines as prescribed
 - If you are in the **yellow zone**, you may be having, or will soon have, an asthma attack. You may or may not have any symptoms, but your lungs are not working as well as they should. Take the medicines listed in your action plan. If you stay in the yellow zone, your doctor may need to increase the dose or add a medicine
 - If you are in the **red zone**, follow your action plan and call your doctor. If you can't get in touch with your doctor, go to the emergency

department. **Call 911 right away if you are having severe trouble breathing**

- Use an asthma diary to track your peak flow readings, your symptoms, or both. If you have an attack, write down what caused it (if you know), the symptoms, and what medicine you took

Review the Plan with Your Doctor

- Take both the asthma action plan and the asthma diary when you see your doctor. Get answers to any questions you have about your asthma plan or your symptoms. Let your doctor know if treatment is not controlling your asthma attacks
- Take your medicines so your doctor can review your treatment. Also take your peak flow meter if you have one.
- Make sure you know how and when to call your doctor or go to the hospital
- Tell your doctor if you are having trouble following your action plan

Source: Healthwise Knowledgebase

How Food Affects **Your Lungs**

It's no secret that eating a well-balanced diet is key to keeping our bodies and our minds strong and healthy. Eating the right foods and nutrients gives us energy, supports our immune system and improves our overall health—including lung health!

While there's no specific diet recommendation for asthma, there are some foods and nutrients that may help support lung function and reduce asthma symptoms.

Nutrients That May Help

Vitamin D plays an important role in boosting immune system responses and helps to reduce airway inflammation. It can be found in fortified milk, salmon, orange juice, and eggs.

Vitamin E contains a chemical compound called tocopherol, which may decrease the risk of some asthma symptoms like coughing or wheezing. Look for vitamin E in almonds, raw seeds, swiss chard, mustard greens, kale, broccoli, and hazelnuts.

Use Caution with These Foods

Sulfites may cause an adverse reaction or worsen asthma symptoms in some people. They can be found in dried fruits, pickled food, bottled lemon or lime juice, and alcohol.

Foods that cause gas, as they may make breathing more difficult. Watch out for beans, carbonated drinks, and fried food.

Be sure to talk to your doctor about any changes to your diet or foods that may impact your asthma.

Source: The American Lung Association

Symptoms of **Difficulty Breathing**

It is important to know the symptoms of difficulty breathing in asthma. If you or your child is having trouble breathing, follow your asthma action plan.

Mild Difficulty Breathing

You are having mild difficulty breathing if:

- Your breathing is slightly faster than normal
- Your skin color is normal

Moderate Difficulty Breathing

Symptoms of moderate difficulty breathing include:

- Breathing faster than normal
- Tiring quickly during talking or eating. You may have to catch your breath during eating. Difficulty while eating may lead to poor nutrition
- Using your abdominal (belly) muscles to assist breathing. The abdominal wall collapses inward instead of expanding outward when you breathe in
- Having skin color—especially on the face, hands, and feet—that is pale to slightly gray, or lacy purple and pale (mottled). But your tongue, gums, and lips remain pink

Severe

Difficulty Breathing

Symptoms of severe difficulty breathing include:

- Breathing very fast. Children usually grunt with each breath. Shortness of breath can interfere with the ability to speak smoothly
- Appearing anxious and being unable to eat because it's too hard to breathe
- Using the neck, chest, and abdominal muscles to breathe; the skin between, above, and under the ribs collapses inward with each breath. The person also may open his or her nostrils wide when breathing in
- Taking longer than usual to breathe out and sometimes having a high-pitched, musical sound when breathing in
- Sitting up, leaning forward, or sitting with the nose tilted up as if sniffing the air
- Having skin color that is persistently pale, gray, bluish, or mottled, including the tongue, lips, earlobes, and nail beds



Did you get your flu shot?

If not, visit your doctor or stop by your pharmacy to protect yourself and those around you.

LivingWell



PRSRT STD US
Postage
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MVP Health Care

625 State Street
Schenectady, NY 12305-2111
mvphealthcare.com

Are you due for important health screenings?

Regular screenings are important to help maintain your overall health. For screenings that are appropriate for your age and sex, visit mvphealthcare.com/PreventiveCare and talk to your doctor.

Quick Tips for Your Next Appointment

Patients who have good relationships with their doctors are more satisfied with their care and have better results. Whether your appointment is in-person or virtual, here are some tips to help you and your doctor become better partners in improving your health care:

- Write down your questions before your visit. List the most important ones first to make sure they get asked and answered.
- Bring a “health history” list with you and keep it up to date.
- Always bring any medications you are taking, including over-the-counter, or a list of those medications (include when and how often you take them) and what strength.
- You might want to bring someone along to help you ask questions and remember the answers.

Find more information and printable forms at mvphealthcare.com.

Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

