



Who's Got Control — You or Your Asthma?



Living with asthma is no picnic. Asthma sufferers often feel like there is an elephant sitting on their chest, and struggle simply to draw a normal breath. You do not want to miss out on summer activities or worry about when the next attack will come.

While asthma is not curable, it is treatable. Learn to use a peak flow meter and follow your asthma action plan. Learn how to prevent future attacks by using your controller medicine as directed by your provider.

If you have a good asthma control plan you may be able to:

- Breathe freely day and night because of nearly normal lung function
- Minimize or stop attacks
- Respond to flare-ups before they become serious
- Reduce “down time” from work or school
- Exercise and participate in regular activities
- Avoid emergency room visits and/or hospital stays

When you and your provider write an asthma action plan, you will learn how to better control your asthma. And hopefully, no elephants will be sitting on your chest!

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All material in this newsletter is for information only. This does not replace your provider's advice.

Safe Exercise with COPD



You need to stay active while living with COPD. Your exercises do not have to be fancy or hard, but they should be done safely and on a regular basis. **Check with your provider before you start any exercise program.**

What kind of exercise is good for people with COPD?

Stretching and breathing exercises, plus a daily walk, are a good start. Walking is one of the best forms of exercise because it is simple and can be done anywhere during any time of year. Try walking around your home, at the nearby mall, or at a local park.

You should be doing the following exercises at least three times per week:

- **Stretching** relaxes you and makes you more flexible. It is also a good way to warm up before and cool down after exercising.
- **Aerobic exercise** allows your body to use oxygen better. Swimming, walking, climbing stairs and dancing are all great choices.
- **Light weight training** makes your muscles stronger so your breathing muscles do not have to work as hard.

Tips for easy exercise:

- **Talk to your provider before starting your exercise program.** Your provider may advise you to use your inhaler before exercising or recommend using portable oxygen during your workouts.
- **Pace yourself.** No matter what kind of exercise you're doing, never rush! Take your time. Sit or lie down if you feel dizzy.
- **Be patient.** Start off slow. Over time, you can increase your activity level.
- **Set goals.** Setting a fitness goal is the first step to reaching it. If you want to be able to walk for 10 minutes without becoming breathless, make that your goal.
- **Relax and think positive.** Relaxation and a positive outlook can help you get the most out of exercising.
- **Watch pollution levels and weather.** Do not exercise outdoors if smog or pollution levels are high. Avoid exercising outside on days that are too cold, too hot, or too humid.
- **Find exercises that are right for you.** You are more likely to stick with an exercise program when it is something you enjoy. If you like to dance, sign up for lessons. If you like to swim, check out the programs at your local pool.

Traveling with Oxygen

With a little planning, you can still lead an active life and go anywhere you want! Here are some travel tips:

- Find out how long your portable oxygen supply will last. Allow for delays in your travel.
- Secure your oxygen unit. For example, in a car fasten it with a safety belt and shoulder harness.
- Set up an “oxygen supply network.” Before traveling a long distance, find oxygen suppliers along your travel route. Your local supplier may be able to help.
- Check with airlines before flying. Most airlines will not let you use your own oxygen on board. Your portable tanks must be emptied and stored as luggage. However, some airlines will provide oxygen for you if you ask before your flight.
- Have an oxygen supply ready when you get off the plane.
- Last of all, have a great time!

Asthma Action Plans

An action plan is a written daily routine. You can follow this routine to help you control your asthma. An action plan can help you with the following:

- Identify and avoid triggers;
- Identify and treat early symptoms of a flare-up;
- Manage a severe flare-up; and
- Know when to seek emergency care.

You can organize your action plan by using the traffic light system. This includes having a green, yellow, and red zone.

Green zone

This zone describes how to take care of your or your child’s asthma on a daily basis. It should include a list of triggers and ways to avoid them.

Yellow zone

This zone describes how to look for symptoms of your asthma. It should include a list of early flare-ups to watch for. It should also include ways to treat these symptoms.

Red zone

This zone describes what to do when your asthma symptoms become severe. It should include emergency



phone numbers and a list of urgent care centers or emergency rooms near your home.

You should also include the names and dosages of all your medicines. The action plan should tell when and how they should be used.

After you have completed an action plan with your provider, you should put it in a place where you can see it every day. You should also share your action plan with family members and care givers. It is important to update your action plan every time your medicine or the dosage changes. Having an action plan is an important part of managing your asthma. If you do not have an action plan ask your provider to help you create one.



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