

# Clear and Easy #15



**Molina Healthcare**  
**24 Hour Nurse Advice Line**  
(888) 275-8750  
TTY: (866) 735-2929

**Molina Healthcare**  
**Línea de TeleSalud**  
**Disponible las 24 Horas**  
(866) 648-3537  
TTY: (866) 833-4703

# **Titles by Clear and Easy**

Book 1 – Pregnancy

Book 2 – Diabetes

Book 3 – Stress and Depression

Book 4 – End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD)

Book 5 – Asthma

Book 6 – Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary  
Disease (COPD)

Book 7 – Congestive Heart Failure

Book 8 – Hypertension

Book 9 – Coronary Heart Disease

Book 10 – How to Take Care of Your Sick  
Family

Book 11 – Help to Quit Smoking

Book 12 – Kids and Asthma

Book 13 – Kids and Diabetes

Book 14 – How to Keep Your Family Healthy

Book 15 – Asthma and COPD

Book 16 – Hypertension and Coronary Heart  
Disease

Book 17 – Postpartum: Caring for You and  
Your Newborn

Do you have health questions? Call Molina Healthcare's Nurse Advice Line. Places to put our number:

- On all your home phones.
- Your cell phone. Add us to your list of contacts.
- Your purse or wallet.
- Refrigerator door.
- Bedroom nightstand.
- In your medicine cabinet.
- In easy to reach places.



**NM Members:**

Molina Healthcare services are funded in part under contract with the State of New Mexico.

# Clear and Easy

## Book 15 - Asthma and COPD

### Important Phone Numbers

Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Family: \_\_\_\_\_

Neighbor: \_\_\_\_\_

Molina Healthcare offers programs to help members stay healthy. These health and wellness programs are at no cost to you. They are part of your benefits. Programs include:

- Asthma
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Diabetes
- Heart Health
- Pregnancy Support
- Stop Smoking

Molina Healthcare uses different ways to identify members for these programs. These include information from claims, pharmacy, or other health programs. You are eligible for one or more of these programs. The choice is yours.

Our providers, nurses and other staff are here to help you learn about your health. You can talk with them by phone to get answers to your questions. You can also get more information such as a newsletter or booklet. Our staff can help you stay in touch with your health care provider. They can help you understand your treatment. They can also help you if you have any problems.

You are part of one of these programs. Call us if you would like more services. Your health care provider can call us too. The number to call is **(866) 891-2320**. You can choose to be removed at any time. We look forward to helping you stay in good health.

***If you need this booklet in another language, large print, Braille or audio format, please call the Member Services number on the back of your ID card.***



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## **Introduction**

You and your provider can work together to help you be as healthy as you can be. This booklet gives you some quick tips on what you can do to manage asthma. You should not use this booklet in place of what your health care provider tells you. If you have problems with your health, be sure to see your provider (or Primary Care Provider) for treatment.

For questions about medicine or health concerns, you can call your provider.

If your health plan has a nurse advice line, you can call them too. If you don't feel well, they can help you decide what to do.

You may have someone who helps you with your health care. You must give permission to your provider or case managers to talk to this person about your care.



*This booklet is to help you. It does not take the place of your provider's care. If you or your family has an emergency, you should call your provider. Or, go to the nearest emergency room.*

## **What Is Asthma?**

Asthma is a lung disease. The airways swell and become narrow. Asthma can cause wheezing, chest tightness, shortness of breath and coughing. The coughing often occurs at night or early in the morning. Asthma affects people of all ages, but it most often starts during childhood.

The airways are tubes that carry air into and out of your lungs. The tubes have muscles around them. People with asthma have sensitive airways. They have a reaction when they breathe in certain things. This is an asthma attack. The muscles tighten and less air can flow into the lungs.

The swelling can get worse, making it harder to breathe. The lungs make more mucus which makes it even harder.

Sometimes asthma symptoms are mild and go away on their own. Treatment with an asthma medicine can also stop the attack. Other times, symptoms may get worse.

When symptoms get worse, you're having an asthma attack. It's important to treat symptoms as soon as you notice them.

Don't let them get worse. Severe asthma attacks may require emergency care, and they can be fatal.



## Goals for Asthma Treatment

The goal of asthma treatment is to control the disease. Your asthma is in good control if:

- You don't have coughing and shortness of breath.
- You don't need quick-relief medicines as much.
- You can meet your peak flow meter goal.



- You can do your normal activities.
- You can sleep through the night.
- You don't need to go to the emergency room or hospital.

There is a lot you can do to help control asthma. Talk to your provider about:

- Your asthma treatment goals and how to achieve them.
- Your medications: what they are for, how much to take and when and how to take them.
- How to use your inhaler.
- How to use a peak flow meter.
- How to avoid asthma triggers.
- Warning signs of an asthma attack.
- What you should do if your symptoms get worse.

Ask for a written asthma action plan in case you have an asthma attack. Be sure you understand it.

## **Asthma and Exercise**

Check with your health care provider to make sure it's OK to exercise. People with asthma should not avoid exercise. If your asthma is controlled, you can exercise. Exercise can help you be healthy.

It helps your lungs and breathing muscles. It will help your immune system. And, it helps you maintain your weight.



If you have asthma that's triggered by exercise, you should follow your asthma action plan. When you exercise, keep your rescue inhaler with you. Your health care provider may also want you to take your rescue inhaler before your exercise.

When you exercise, start slow. Make sure you warm up and cool down. Don't exercise outside if it's hot or smoggy. If pollen triggers your asthma, exercise indoors. If you feel like you are having trouble breathing, STOP and take your rescue inhaler. Sit up and wait until the symptoms get better. If they don't get better in a few minutes, take your rescue inhaler again.



## Using a Metered Dose Inhaler

It is important to take your medicine the right way. Be sure to go over this with your provider.

1. Take off the cap. Shake the inhaler.
2. Stand up. Breathe out.
3. Use the inhaler in any **one of these ways**:
  - A. Open Mouth: Hold inhaler 1 to 2 inches in front of your mouth (about the width of two fingers).
  - B. Spacer: Use a spacer or holding chamber. These come in many shapes and sizes.
  - C. In the Mouth: Put the inhaler in your mouth. Do not use for steroid inhalers.

4. As you start to breathe in, push down on the top of the inhaler and keep breathing in slowly for 3 to 5 seconds.
5. Hold your breath for 10 seconds. Breathe out.

## **Asthma Triggers**

Your provider can help you find out what you are sensitive to. These are called allergens and irritants. These are things you should avoid. There are steps you can take to help control your asthma.

### **Allergens**

**Animal Dander**- Some people are allergic to the flakes of skin or dried saliva from animals with fur or feathers. The best thing to do is to keep furred or feathered pets outdoors.

Things that can help:

- Keep the pet out of your bedroom and other sleeping areas.
- Remove carpets and furniture covered with cloth from your home. Keep the pet away from fabric-covered furniture and carpets.

**Dust Mites** - Many people with asthma are allergic to dust mites. Dust mites are tiny bugs that are found in every home. They are found in:

- Mattresses
- Pillows
- Carpets
- Fabric covered furniture
- Bed covers

- Stuffed toys
- Other fabric-covered items

Things that can help:

- Put a special dust-proof cover on your mattress.
- Put your pillow in a special dust-proof cover or wash the pillow each week in hot water. Water must be hotter than 130° F to kill the mites. You can also use cold or warm water with detergent and bleach.
- Wash the sheets and blankets on your bed each week in hot water.
- Try not to sleep or lie on cloth-covered cushions.

- Remove carpets from your bedroom if you can.
- Keep stuffed toys out of the bed. Wash the toys each week in hot water. You can also use cold or warm water with detergent and bleach.

**Cockroaches** - Many people are allergic to the dried droppings and remains of cockroaches.

Things that can help:

- Keep food and garbage in closed containers. Never leave food out.
- Use poison baits, powders, gels, or paste (for example, boric acid). You can also use traps.
- If a spray is used to kill roaches, stay out of the room until the odor goes away.

## **Indoor Mold**

- Fix leaky faucets, pipes or other sources of water that have mold around them.
- Clean moldy surfaces with a cleaner that has bleach in it.

## **Pollen and Outdoor Mold** - During allergy season:

- Try to keep your windows closed.
- Stay indoors with windows closed from late morning to afternoon, if you can. Pollen and some mold spore counts are highest at that time.
- Ask your provider whether you need to take or adjust medicine before allergy season starts.

## **Irritants**

### **Tobacco Smoke**

- If you smoke, ask your provider for ways to help you quit. Ask family members to quit smoking, too.
- Do not allow smoking in your home or car.

### **Smoke, Strong Odors and Sprays**

- If possible, do not use a wood-burning stove, kerosene heater or fireplace.
- Try to stay away from strong odors and sprays. Examples: perfume, talcum powder, hair spray and paints.

### **Vacuum Cleaners**

- Try to get someone else to vacuum for you once or twice a week. Stay out of rooms while they are being vacuumed

and for a short while afterward.

- If you vacuum, use a dust mask. Try to use a double-layered or microfilter vacuum cleaner bag or a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter.

## **Other Things That Can Make Asthma Worse**

- Sulfites in foods and beverages. Foods that can cause asthma problems:
  - Beer or wine
  - Dried fruit
  - Processed potatoes
  - Shrimp
  - Food allergies
- Cold air. Cover your nose and mouth



with a scarf on cold or windy days.

- Other medicines. Tell your provider about all the medicines you take.

## **Warning Signs of an Asthma Attack**

Check below any things that you know may warn you of an attack coming on:

- Awakening at night
- Difficulty breathing
- Wheezing
- Coughing, especially at night
- Chest tightness
- Feeling very tired
- Itchy or sore throat
- Itchy nose
- Itchy, watery or glassy eyes
- Need more beta2-agonist than usual

## What Is COPD?

COPD is a disease that makes it hard to breathe. COPD is short for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It doesn't really go away and may get worse over time.

COPD includes two main conditions—emphysema and chronic bronchitis. In emphysema, the lung tissue is damaged or destroyed.

In chronic bronchitis, the lining of the airways is always irritated and inflamed. This makes lots of mucus form, which makes it hard to breathe. Most people who have COPD have both emphysema and chronic obstructive bronchitis.

## Symptoms

Some of the symptoms of COPD are similar to the symptoms of other diseases and conditions. Your provider can tell you if you have COPD. People with COPD may:

- Cough a lot and have large amounts of mucus.
- Have wheezing.
- Be short of breath.
- Have chest tightness.
- May get colds or flu more often.

If you keep smoking, damage will occur. In severe COPD, you may have other symptoms, such as:

- Shortness of breath getting worse.
- Swelling of feet and ankles.

- Weight loss.
- Low endurance.

Some severe symptoms may require treatment in a hospital. Be sure to call your provider if:

- You're having a hard time breathing or talking.
- Your lips or fingernails turn bluish or gray. (This is a sign of low oxygen in your blood.)
- You're not mentally alert.
- Your heartbeat is very fast.
- Your usual treatment for symptoms that are getting worse isn't working.

## **Causes**

Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of COPD. Most people who have COPD smoke or used to smoke. Being around chemicals, other smokers, or dust can also cause COPD.

## **When to See Your Provider**

It's a good idea to have someone go with you to see the provider. It's easier to learn and ask questions when there are two people there. It helps to be ready to answer these questions:

- What symptoms are you having?  
When did they start?
- What makes your symptoms worse?  
Better?

- What treatment have you had for COPD? Did it help?
- What medications do you take?
- Are you being treated for any other medical problems?

Be sure to bring all your medicines with you.

## **What You Can Do to Feel Better**

There isn't a cure for COPD. COPD can be worse if you are exposed to things that irritate the lungs. The most important thing you can do is quit smoking. Your provider can help you quit smoking. Try to stay away from other people who are smoking. Avoid other things that irritate the lungs. These include air pollution, chemical fumes or dust.

## **COPD and Exercise**

Check with your health care provider to make sure it's OK to exercise. People with COPD should not avoid exercise.

Exercise can help you be healthy. It helps your lungs and breathing muscles. It will help your immune system. It helps you maintain your weight and it will improve your mood.



## Medicines

**Be sure to take your medicines just as your provider tells you.** This is important so you keep feeling your best. If you have any questions, call your provider. Tell your provider if you cannot afford your medicines or if you have any side effects.

## Vaccines

**Flu Shots.** The flu (influenza) can cause serious problems for people who have COPD. Flu shots can reduce your risk of the flu. Talk with your provider about getting a flu shot every year.

**Pneumococcal Vaccine.** This vaccine lowers your risk of pneumonia. People who have COPD have more risk. Talk with your provider about whether you should get this vaccine.



## Support

Many people with Asthma or COPD have other health issues. These can include:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Osteoporosis
- Depression
- Cancer

Coping with these issues can be hard. You may be stressed or become depressed. It's different for every person.

People who help take care of others can also be stressed. It can be hard to keep up

with a treatment plan. Some people don't understand what they need to do. Family members may disagree with a treatment plan. There can be financial problems.

Sometimes people feel fear or anxiety, even depression. Alcohol and other substance abuse can occur.

Tell your family and friends how you feel. Let them know how they can help you.

It's OK to ask for help if you are having any of these problems.



Your treatment team can help you. Talk to your provider or case manager. Joining a support group can help too. This booklet gives names of places where you can get help.

## **How Can Family or Friends Help?**

You may have someone who helps you with your health care. They can:

- Help remind you to take your medicines.
- Help you buy



and prepare healthy foods.

- Take a walk with you.
- Go to provider visits with you.

Sometimes it helps when someone else hears what your health care provider says. You must give permission to your providers or case managers to talk to this person about your care.

## Asthma Action Plan

**Address:**

**Telephone Number:**

**Emergency Contact Name:**

**Hospital/Emergency  
Department Number:**

## Long-Term Control Medicines

Name	Dose	When To Take

**Be sure to take your medicines just as your provider tells you.** This is important so you keep feeling your best. If you have any questions, call your provider. Tell your provider if you cannot afford your medicines or if you have any side effects.

## Quick-Relief Medicines

Name	Dose	When To Take
Short-acting beta2-agonist		

## My Peak Flow

My Best Peak Flow:

Green Zone

(80-100 percent of best peak flow)

Yellow Zone

(50-79 percent of best peak flow)

Red Zone

(Less than 50 percent of best peak flow)



## Resources

### **National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute**

(301) 592-8573

Asthma: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/naepp/>

COPD: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/copd/index.htm>

### **American Lung Association**

(800) 548-8252

Asthma: <http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/asthma/>

COPD: <http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/copd/>

### **Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America**

(800) 727-8462

[http://www.aafa.org/index\\_noflash.cfm](http://www.aafa.org/index_noflash.cfm)

**Allergy and Asthma  
Network/Mothers of Asthmatics**  
(800) 878-4403  
<http://www.aanma.org/>

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**  
Indoor Air Division  
(202) 564-2313  
<http://www.epa.gov/asthma/index.html>

**C.O.P.D. Foundation**  
(866) 316-2673  
<http://www.copdfoundation.org>

**American Academy of Family  
Physicians: FamilyDoctor.org Patient  
Education Site**

(800) 274-2237

Asthma:

[http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/  
diseases-conditions/asthma.html](http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/asthma.html)

COPD: [http://familydoctor.org/  
familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/  
chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease.  
html](http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease.html)

**Smokefree.gov**

Smokefree.gov provides free, accurate information and professional assistance to help support the immediate and long-term needs of people trying to quit smoking.

(800) 784-8669

TTY (800) 332-8615

<http://www.smokefree.gov>









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