



## Asthma and Your Home

Asthma is one of our nation's most common chronic health problems. Many factors in your home can cause an asthma attack. These factors are called "triggers." Triggers are all around you. Knowing your triggers is the first step to controlling your asthma.

You can prevent asthma attacks at home.

1. Do you know the triggers that seem to cause your asthma symptoms? Some examples include:
  - Mold or dampness
  - Dust mites (tiny bugs that live in dust)
  - Pets with long shedding fur
  - Cockroaches
  - Rodents (mice and rats)
  - Secondhand smoke
  - Wood smoke
  - Strong odors
  
2. Do your part to keep your home clean. Try to:
  - Wash sheets and blankets every week in hot water
  - Use allergen-proof pillow and mattress covers
  - Vacuum or mop often
  - Dust weekly
  - Keep windows closed to limit house dust
  - Do not allow smoking in your house
  - Avoid outside activity when pollen levels, wind and air pollution are high
  - Keep pets out of your bedroom
  - Run exhaust fans in your bathroom. This will help reduce mold and mildew.

Your provider can also help you find what makes your asthma worse. He or she can work with you to reduce and avoid asthma triggers.

**Important:** Most people with asthma should take a controller medicine. It helps prevent asthma symptoms. You need to take it every day. It is different from your rescue inhaler. You need to use a rescue inhaler for asthma symptom relief. Talk to your provider about any medicine you take.

### Contents

Asthma and Your Home .....	1
Using a Peak Flow Meter .....	2
Peak Flow Diary .....	2
Tips to Remember to Take Your Medicine .....	3
COPD and Your Family .....	4
COPD and Dyspnea .....	5

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

This newsletter and future health education newsletters may be viewed on our website at [www.MolinaHealthcare.com/Medicare](http://www.MolinaHealthcare.com/Medicare).

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## Using a Peak Flow Meter

### What is a peak flow meter?

A peak flow meter can be a great tool for seeing how your asthma is doing. It is a hand-held device that measures the ability of your lungs to push out air. It can help pinpoint what allergens cause your asthma. For example, you can measure if your lung capacity is better or worse at work than when you are at home. If your results at work are better, that could mean allergens at home are causing your asthma to flare up.



### What does a peak flow meter reading tell you?

A high reading means that your lungs are working well. You might be able to take less medicine. A low reading means your lungs are not working as well. You might need more medicine. Track your readings and talk to your provider about your medicine.

### How often should you use your peak flow meter?

Take a reading in the morning and in the evening around 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Ask your provider if you need to take your readings more often.

You should always write down your peak flow meter readings!

Keep track of your readings over time. Keep your provider informed. This will help you stay in control of your asthma

## Peak Flow Diary

Provider Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Provider Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time	Peak Flow Reading	Peak Flow Zone (Green, Yellow or Red)	Symptoms (Wheezing, tight chest, etc.)	Medication Taken (Quick-relief or Daily Medicine)	Dose

Keep a diary to help you track how well the treatment is working. This information can help your provider decide if changes to the treatment plan are needed.

## Tips to Remember to Take Your Medicine

Do you forget to take your medicines? You are not alone. Here are some tips to help you remember to take your medicine.

**Put your pills where you will see them.** If you take a pill with breakfast, put your pills on the breakfast table.

**Put a reminder note where you will see it.** Put a note on your coffee cup or the bathroom mirror if you take the medicine in the morning.

**Buy a pill organizer.** They come in many sizes and shapes. Your pharmacist can help you choose one.

**Set an alarm.** Use an alarm clock or set the alarm on your phone, watch or computer.

**Ask for help.** Ask family or friends to remind you, especially when you first start taking the medicine.

**Mark your medicine bottles with different colors.** For example, blue for morning, green for mid-day and red for evening.

**Color-code your inhalers.** You may use inhalers to treat asthma or COPD. Mark your rescue inhaler in red and your control inhaler in green.

Make sure to keep a list of all your current medicines. At least once a year, be sure to review all your medicines with your provider. This helps make sure that you:

- Take all the medicines you need
- Stop taking the ones you no longer need
- Take medicines that are safe to take together

Medicines are an important part of your treatment plan. Not taking them can affect how well your condition is managed.

**Reminder:** Bring your medicines, including over the counter medicine, with you to all provider appointments.



## COPD and Your Family

Living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) affects you and those you care about. It is best to have support from your friends and family.

Teach your friends and family about COPD. Ask them to learn as much as they can about it. Have them come with you to your provider visits. They can help write down answers to questions or any instructions from your provider. Also, let them know about the lifestyle changes you need to make.

Stop smoking if you are a smoker. This will help control your symptoms. Get support for this. Also, ask your family members to exercise with you. Tell them how changes in your diet will help you breathe better. Talk to them about any medicine you take and how to get help in an emergency.

With COPD, you may have trouble doing things that used to be easy for you. This could include getting dressed in the morning. You may feel anxious, angry or depressed by these changes. It is important to talk about how you feel with your friends and family. Together, you can find a way to get through it.



Try to do these things to help you manage your COPD:

- Get dressed every day
- Get outside whenever possible
- Keep up with hobbies you enjoy
- Stay in touch with others
- Join a COPD support group
- Share your feelings
- Stick to your treatment plan

Take charge of your COPD. Don't worry about asking for help. Getting the support you need is a smart way to manage your disease.

## COPD and Dyspnea

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a disease that damages your lungs. If you have COPD, you may have heard of “dyspnea.” Dyspnea (disp-NEE-uh) means difficult, painful breathing. It is also a feeling of shortness of breath. For people with COPD, dyspnea is caused by air that gets trapped in their lungs. This can be hard to live with.

What can you do about dyspnea?

- 1) Try pursed-lip breathing. Before you exhale, purse your lips like you are going to whistle. Then, let the air out slowly. This prevents air trapping.
- 2) Enjoy some exercise. Light walking will keep your muscles strong. This will help you breathe better. Exercise is also found to reduce stress and anxiety.
- 3) Change your diet. For some people, eating fewer carbohydrates helps them breathe better.

If you have any questions about dyspnea, talk to your health care provider. Your provider can help you develop a treatment plan and inform you about medications to treat dyspnea.





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