

Asthma and COPD Awareness

Molina Breathe with Easesm and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

Molina Healthcare of New Mexico • Summer 2013



Asthma Triggers

You may not always know when an asthma attack will happen, but there are things you can avoid to help prevent one. An attack can cause you to have asthma symptoms, such as:

- **Chest tightness** – Your chest may feel tight, especially during cold weather or exercise. This also can be the first sign of a flare-up.
- **Shortness of breath** – You may feel like you can't get enough air into your lungs. It may occur only once in a while, or often.
- **Wheezing** – You may notice a wheezing sound when you breathe.
- **Frequent Cough** – This may be more common at night. You may or may not cough up mucus.

There are many things around you that can “trigger” asthma symptoms and cause an attack. Triggers can be simple items in your house or outside. Items can include dust, pets or the weather. Knowing what triggers your asthma symptoms can help you control your asthma.



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If you need help quitting, call Molina Healthcare's Smoke Free Program. For one-on-one help, call: (866) 472-9483

You are receiving this newsletter as part of a Disease Management Program. If you do not want to receive this newsletter or participate in any Disease Management Program please let us know. Please call us at: (866) 891-2320.

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Asthma Triggers - *Continued*

Do you know what your triggers are?

Each person has his or her own triggers, so it's important to know yours. Check the items that cause you to have asthma symptoms. Discuss your triggers with your provider and family. You can work together to avoid the triggers and keep your asthma in control.

- ☐ Weather changes
- ☐ Dust
- ☐ Mold
- ☐ Tobacco or burning wood
- ☐ Exercise
- ☐ Pollen
- ☐ Pet dander
- ☐ Strong odors
- ☐ Illness, colds
- ☐ Emotions
- ☐ Certain foods
- ☐ Other: _____



How can you avoid your triggers?

- 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.

Your provider can help you recognize what makes your asthma worse. He or she can suggest simple solutions to reduce and avoid asthma triggers.

Did you know?

The Air Quality Index (AQI) tells you how bad the air is outside. To find out if the air in your town is good or bad check out your local paper or visit www.airnow.gov.

Safe Exercise with COPD

You need to stay active while living with COPD. Your exercises do not have to be hard. They must 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. It is simple and can be done at any time of year. Try walking around your home, at the nearby mall, or at a local park.



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

- **Stretching** relaxes you and makes you more flexible. It is a good way to warm up before and cool down after you exercise.
- **Aerobic exercise** allows your body to use oxygen better. Examples of these exercises are:
 - » Walking
 - » Climbing stairs
 - » Dancing
 - » Swimming
- **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 ask you to use your inhaler before exercising. He also may suggest 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.** Set simple goals. Reaching your goals can keep you motivated.
- **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. Stay indoors 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.

COPD and Your Family

Living with COPD affects you and those you care about. You will face many hard times over the course of your illness. You also may go through many different feelings. This is why support from your family and friends is important.

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.

To help control your symptoms, you should stop smoking if you are a smoker. 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 your medications. Go over your action plan and how to get help in an emergency. You are more likely to stick to a treatment plan with their help.

In addition, you will need support to get through hard times. Some of these can come on suddenly. For example, you might get a respiratory infection. Other hard times may be with everyday activities. You might find it hard to get dressed. You may need help doing tasks that used to be simple.

You may feel panicked, anxious, angry or depressed at these times. Whatever you are feeling, it is crucial to talk about it. Together, you can find a way to get through it.



Ask your family to help get you to do the things listed below. Doing these things will help you deal with your feelings:

- 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 a team approach and divide up your duties. This can help lower your stress level. It also can help you take the lead in managing your illness. Another way to lower stress is to do something fun with your family. Find something that you all enjoy. Sharing time together can be relaxing and fulfilling.

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.



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 sudden 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 of them will not let you use your own oxygen on board. Your portable tanks must be emptied and stored as luggage. Before you fly, ask the airline if they can provide oxygen for you.
- Have an oxygen supply ready when you get off the plane.
- Last of all, have a great time!



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

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

Asthma Action Plan

An action plan is a written daily routine. You can follow this routine to help you control your or your child's asthma. The action plan tells you the steps to take to prevent asthma symptoms from getting worse. 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
- Know when to seek emergency care

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



Green zone

This zone describes how to manage asthma on a daily basis. It should include a list of triggers and ways to avoid them. The green zone is where you want to be on a daily basis. In this zone, you have no asthma symptoms and you feel well.



Yellow zone

This zone describes how to look for asthma symptoms. It should include a list of early flare-ups to watch for. It also should include ways to treat these symptoms. The yellow zone means you are having some symptoms. Make sure to follow the steps listed to keep asthma symptoms from getting worse.



Red zone

This zone describes what to do when asthma symptoms become severe. It also should list important phone numbers such as:

- Your provider phone number
- Local urgent care centers
- Emergency rooms near your home

You also should list all medicines and dosages that need to be taken. The action plan should tell when and how they should be used.

The action plan needs to be completed with your provider. Your provider will help calculate the zones in your action plan. It needs to be kept in a place where you can see it every day. The action plan also should be shared with family members and care givers.

Make sure to have your provider update the action plan whenever changes are made to your treatment plan. Having an action plan is an important part of managing asthma. If you do not have an action plan, ask your provider to help you create one.

My Asthma Action Plan

Name: _____ DOB: _____
 Parent/Guardian: _____ Phone: _____
 Provider: _____ Phone: _____
 Emergency Contact: _____
 Asthma Triggers: _____
 Medication/Food Allergies: _____

To be completed by your health care provider: This patient has been instructed in the proper way to take his/her medications. He/She is capable of self-administering medications: ☐ Yes ☐ No. He/She can reliably report asthma symptoms: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Health care Provider's Signature: _____ Date: _____ Phone: _____

I Feel Well

- Breathing is good
- No cough or wheeze
- Can work & play



Personal Best

Peak Flow Number

_____ to _____

Prevent asthma symptoms every day:

Medicine:

How Much:

When:

20 minutes before exercise or sports, use this medicine:

I do NOT Feel Well

- Cough or wheeze
- Difficulty breathing
- Wake up at night



80% of Personal Best

Peak Flow Number

_____ to _____

Caution! Slow down & take relief medicine:

Medicine:

How Much:

When:

Also continue/increase your controller medicine:

Call your provider if you have these symptoms often or if your relief medicine does not work!

I Feel Awful

- Medicine not helping
- Breathing hard, fast
- Can't talk/walk well



50% of Personal Best

Peak Flow Number

_____ to _____

Medical Alert - Get Help NOW!

Take these medicines until you talk to the provider:

Medicine:

How Much:

When:

Call 911 if your asthma attack is severe and does not improve.

Patient/Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____



QI Department

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