MOLINA HEALTHCARE

Asthma and COPD Awareness

Molina Breathe with Ease℠ and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

Molina Healthcare of Texas • Fall 2012

Importance of Controller Medicines

Asthma is a disease that causes swelling of the airways. When airways are inflamed, they start to swell. This can cause them to react to many different things. When airways are inflamed you can have frequent asthma episodes or attacks. To help keep your asthma under control it is important to take all medicine as prescribed by your provider.

There are two main kinds of asthma medicines.

- Long-term control medicine
- Rescue or quick-relief medicine

Controller medicines are used to "control" your asthma. They keep your airways clear. They also reduce mucus in your lungs. These medicines have a long term effect. They must be taken daily, even when you are feeling well. They may take days or weeks to start working so you want to always take your daily dosage. These medicines will reduce coughing and asthma attacks helping you get a better night's rest.

Controller medicines come in two (2) forms. These are:

- Bronchodilators
- Corticosteroids

Bronchodilators help relax your airways making it easier to breathe for up to 12 hours. If you have frequent asthma symptoms, another type of medicine may be preferred. This type is called a corticosteroid. These can be taken through an inhaler. They have been proven to help keep asthma in control. The risk of any side effects is minimal.

Rescue medicines are another type of asthma medicine. These are to be used when you are having an asthma episode. These help quickly open the airways. They last just a short while.

It is vital to keep your routine of taking controller medicines. Your need to use your rescue medicines will be less. Always talk to your provider before making any decision about your medicine. Together you can figure out which controller medicine is best for you.

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If you need help quitting, call Molina Healthcare's Quit for Life Program. Call 1-866-449-6849 for more information.

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 1-866-891-2320.

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

Pneumonia and COPD

A cold, the flu and pneumonia are respiratory infections. People with COPD can get very sick if they have pneumonia. That's because their lungs are already weak. When a person has pneumonia:

- The lungs fill with mucus and other fluids and make it harder to breathe
- It is harder for oxygen to reach the blood
- Not enough oxygen is in the blood so the body doesn't work the way it should

Do what you can to keep from getting pneumonia. Ask your provider if you need the pneumonia vaccine and when you should get it.

Flu Complications

Most people who get influenza (flu) will recover in a few days or within two weeks. Some people will develop complications as a result of the flu. The flu can make chronic health problems such as asthma and COPD worse. For example, people with asthma may experience asthma attacks while they have the flu.

Examples of flu complications include:

- Pneumonia
- Bronchitis
- Sinus and ear infections

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get the flu, even healthy people. Serious problems from the flu can also happen at any age. Some people are at higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications. These include:

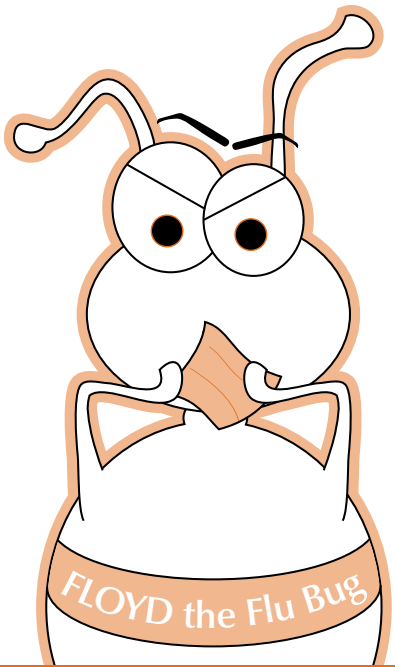
- People 65 years and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions such as:
    - Asthma
    - COPD
    - Heart disease
    - Diabetes
- Pregnant women
- Young children

How do I reduce my risk?

The flu is unpredictable and how severe it is can vary widely from one season to the next. Take the necessary steps to prevent getting the flu. **Start by getting the flu shot.** The flu shot can reduce your risk of getting the flu. People you live with should get a flu shot too. Then they won't increase your chance of getting the flu.

Here are other tips that can help you stay healthy this flu season:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with a flu-like illness, stay home and rest.



Breathing and Coughing Exercises

COPD is a lung disease. This condition can make it hard to breathe. If you have COPD you should do breathing exercises. There are many to choose from. Purse-lip breathing and diaphragmatic breathing are two examples. Coughing is also important to keep your lungs clear. These may help you breathe easier. When used correctly, these exercises can help to keep you from getting short of breath during activity.

Purse-lip Breathing Exercise

Purse-lip breathing is one of the best ways to control shortness of breath. Use it when you start to feel short of breath or when it becomes harder to do activities.

1. Sit in a chair with your head supported.
2. Breathe in slowly through your nose until your lungs are filled up.
3. Don't hold your breath. Purse (pucker) your lips as if you were going to whistle. Then let the air out slowly.
4. Take twice as long to breathe out as you did to breathe in. A good rule is to breathe in for 4 seconds and breathe out for 6 to 8 seconds.
5. Repeat.

Diaphragmatic Breathing Exercises (Belly Breathing)

Belly breathing helps the diaphragm (muscle at the bottom of your lungs) move. This lets you take more air into your lungs and makes breathing easier.

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent. Put a pillow under your head. After you do this exercise for some time, you can try it sitting in a chair.
2. Put the palm of one hand on your belly. Put the palm of your other hand on your chest.
3. Breathe in slowly through your nose. Your belly should push out against your hand. Your chest should not move.
4. Tighten your belly muscles. Breathe out slowly through your mouth. Keep your lips pursed. You should feel your belly go down.

If you feel dizzy as you do this, breathe more slowly.

Start by doing this exercise for 5 to 10 minutes, 3 or 4 times a day. You can slowly increase the amount of time you do this.

Coughing Exercise

Follow the steps below to clear the mucus from your lungs.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair.
2. Lean your head forward slightly.
3. Place both feet firmly on the ground.
4. Breathe in slowly and deeply.
5. Try to hold your breath for 3 seconds.
6. Keep your mouth slightly open and cough twice.

Take a breath and repeat 2 to 4 times.

There are many things you can do to live better with COPD. What you do day by day can make a big difference in how you feel.

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.

Get 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 midday and red for evening.

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.

Travel and Asthma

With a little extra planning, you can safely manage your asthma while traveling. Here are some ideas to keep in mind.

Before you go
See your provider for a check-up. Make sure your asthma is under good control. Have your provider write you a prescription in case you need it while away.

Packing
Pack more medication than you think you will need. If you are traveling by airplane, make sure to keep your medicine and supplies in your carry-on luggage. Take your peak flow meter and asthma action plan. Make sure your action plan is current. Have your provider's phone number handy. Bring your long-term and quick-relief medicine.

Your destination
Think about where you are going and what triggers your asthma. Climate can make a difference. Warm, humid places may mean more contact with dust mites, mold and some pollen types. Cold air in a dry climate can also be an irritant. High altitude can also be a concern. In this case, monitor your breathing during physical activity.

Other tips

- You might consider taking your own dust-proof pillow cover if dust mites are a problem.
- If you are traveling by car and you are allergic to pollen and mold keep the windows closed and the air conditioner on.
- Tell your travel partner about your asthma and how to help you if you need it.

When planning for your trip keep the following in mind:

- Think about where you are going
- Where you will be staying
- What you will be doing

It will help you plan effectively and make the most of your travels.

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Spanish: 1-866-648-3537

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For the hearing impaired, please call

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