



Asthma — your action plan

You came to the emergency department with an asthma attack. You were treated and your breathing has improved enough for you to go home. This sheet explains how to look after your asthma and what to do if it gets worse again.

What is it?

Asthma is a long-term condition of the airways, the tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs. During an attack, the airways become swollen and narrow, making it hard to breathe. You may cough, wheeze, or feel tight in the chest. Triggers include colds, smoke, dust, pollen, cold air, exercise and some medicines. With the right treatment, most people control their asthma well.

Looking after yourself at home

- Take your preventer inhaler every day as prescribed, even when you feel well. It calms the swelling in your airways.
- Keep your reliever inhaler (usually blue) with you at all times. Use it when you are wheezy, coughing or tight in the chest.
- Use a spacer with your inhaler if you have one. It helps more medicine reach your lungs.
- If you need your reliever more often than usual, your asthma is getting worse. Follow your action plan and see a doctor soon.
- Stay away from smoke, including cigarettes, shisha and vaping. Ask others not to smoke around you.
- Avoid your known triggers where you can, such as dust, strong smells or pets.

Medicines

- If you were given steroid tablets, finish the full course exactly as your doctor told you, even if you feel better.
- Take all inhalers as your doctor instructed. Ask a pharmacist to check your inhaler technique.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre within 2 days after this attack.
- Ask your doctor for a written asthma action plan if you do not have one, and review your treatment.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Your reliever inhaler is not helping, or you need it again within 4 hours
- You are too breathless to speak in full sentences, eat or sleep
- Your lips or face look blue or grey
- You feel drowsy, confused or exhausted from breathing
- Your chest is sucking in between the ribs or at the neck with each breath
- Your breathing is getting worse quickly, even after using your reliever



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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