

BREATH | *taking*

Inhale knowledge, exhale worries.



Learn how to better manage your asthma.

What is asthma?

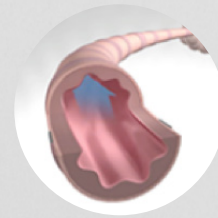


Asthma is a chronic, or long-term, disease that inflames and narrows the airways of your lungs.

Asthma causes a variety of symptoms that can worsen at any time, making breathing difficult. Asthma is a disease that cannot be cured, but it can be managed. Some days you may not have symptoms, but this doesn't mean your asthma has gone away. Asthma doesn't have to slow you down. There are things you can do to help control your asthma.

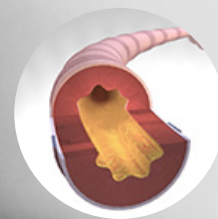
The Airways of a Person Without Asthma

This is how the airways look in a person without asthma. Air can move freely through the airways. But when you have asthma, inflammation and constriction can affect how air flows through the airways.



Airway Inflammation

Inflammation makes the airway irritated and swollen. The swelling can narrow the airway and decrease airflow. The inflammation may be there even when you are not having asthma symptoms. Mucous glands in the airway may produce more mucus than usual, which can further decrease airflow.



You may have figured out that **asthma** can be hard to predict.

It creeps up on you and you cannot see it. You might even get so used to your symptoms that you stop “listening to your lungs” — you might not even notice how often you are coughing and wheezing. It may be pretty hard to stay motivated to take care of your lungs if you’re no longer able to “hear” what your lungs are trying to tell you.



What does all that mean?

By working with your doctor to treat your asthma and maintain control, you may have fewer symptoms like wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, and improve your overall lung health.

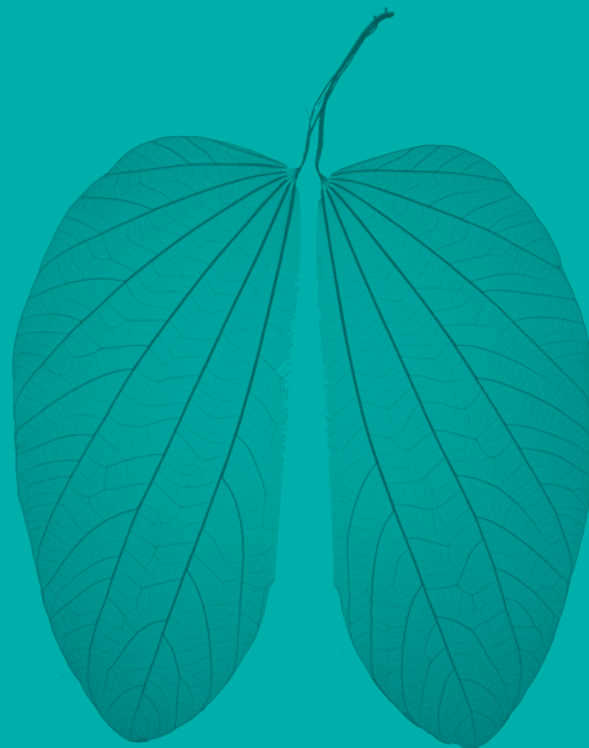
Motivated yet? Probably not.

Looking at lists of potentially scary things may not be all that motivating. Listing out hassles you already deal with every day may not be all that motivating either.

To help get motivated, try this:

1. Choose just one risk or inconvenience from the list. Be sure to choose one that’s familiar to you.
 - Have you had a serious asthma attack? Choose it.
 - Been to the ER? Choose that one.
 - Trouble breathing at night? Choose that one.
2. Now close your eyes and imagine what it would be like to cope with that event right now.
3. Think about it: Would you miss work? A friend’s birthday gathering? Would you feel sick and tired?

Control your asthma better by knowing what triggers it.



Learning what triggers your asthma symptoms gives you the chance to avoid those things. If you've been writing in your [asthma journal](#), you already have a head start in identifying your triggers.

Think about where you were and what you were doing when you noticed a symptom. There's a good chance there was something nearby, or some activity that you were doing, that triggered it. Remember that for every trigger, there may be ways that you can cut down or cut out your exposure.

Asthma triggers could be:

Irritants: Such as perfumes, paints, and cigarette smoke

Allergens: Such as pollen, outdoor mold, indoor mold, pets, dust mites, and cockroaches

Other triggers: Such as certain foods, exercise, colds/viruses, weather, and stress

Some people can feel overwhelmed by trying to avoid triggers. It's okay if at first you feel like you can't manage your triggers very well. After all, it can be a long list, and the triggers seem to be everywhere. Dust mites, pollen, your best friend's cologne... it can be hard to avoid them all!



But it's important to figure out which ones are actually triggers for you. Work with your doctor to learn how to find out which triggers cause you the most trouble.

It's time to put **your** **health** first.

Asthma symptoms may come and go. It may be easy to get used to your symptoms. And it can be hard to put your lungs at the top of your to-do list. That's why it's important to find ways to take care of your lungs.

Putting your health first is one of the best gifts you can give yourself and the important people in your life. We hope you'll use the thoughts below to stay motivated.

Overcoming the roadblocks that may keep you from taking your medications.

Have you ever decided to start exercising? You may know how to get to the gym and what to do once you're there (building skills), but it's hard to make yourself go day after day, week after week (maintaining skills).

That's the difference between building skills (learning) and maintaining skills (using them every day and making them a habit). Once you learn the asthma-related skills that you need to know, you have to put them to work, making them a part of your life. Only then can they help you to better control your asthma. That's why we're going to break them up and build upon what you know.

Let's look at the roadblocks that may keep you from taking your medications as your doctor prescribed:

Roadblock #1: Forgetting to take your medicine

For many people with asthma, even if they know how to take their medications, sometimes they forget. It's easy to forget, especially if your routine has changed or you become very busy.

Roadblock #2: Feeling better doesn't mean your asthma is gone

Another common reason is a bit harder to explain, but it comes down to this: When you feel better and your symptoms aren't bothering you, you may not feel a need to take your asthma medication. That's a common mistake that many people make. But remember, your asthma hasn't gone away. That's why it's important to stay on track with your medication.



You deserve to have control.

If you feel like you aren't getting the control you want, talk to your doctor about how you may achieve that. You deserve to feel as well as you can. What you probably really want is a cure for your asthma. Since there is no cure currently, it's important to create your own personalized asthma goals with help from your doctor. Setting goals for your asthma may help you and your doctor better manage your asthma.

How can you choose the right goals?

We're going to show you three steps that can help you choose the goals you'd like to reach. Then you can make your Asthma Goals Chart and share it with your doctor at your next visit. We'll give you an example to help you get started, and you can use that as a guide when creating your own Asthma Goals Chart.

Step 1: Start out by choosing two or three asthma goals.

Step 2: For each asthma goal you choose, briefly say why that goal is important to you. What will it allow you to do or feel or be?

Here's an example:

"I chose waking up less at night because that will give me more time to rest, which will help me to be in a better mood during the day."

Step 3: See if you can link your reasons for choosing each asthma goal to one of your core values.

Asthma goals	Why this goal is important to me	This goal supports my core value of...
<i>Example: Waking up less at night</i>	<i>Example: I am more patient when I've had enough sleep</i>	<i>Example: Being a better parent</i>

You have choices.

People who live with chronic conditions may not be aware of the choices they have. People tend to be much more motivated to do things they have decided to do. You may have noticed this about yourself: Isn't it easier to get things done when it's your idea rather than someone else's?

So, if having a choice is so important for maintaining motivation, how can you stay motivated when so much of asthma care seems like it's a rule, not a choice?

Let's start to answer that question with a list of some common asthma ground rules, and how you can find choices in them.

Asthma Ground Rules	Your Choice Options
1. See your doctor regularly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Choose your appointment day/time.- Choose the best doctor for you.- Discuss with your doctor how often you want to have follow-up appointments.- How do you want to be reminded of appointments? Text? Phone?
2. Track your lung health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do you want to use paper/pencil?- A phone app?- Track daily or periodically?- What time will you choose to record?- Ask your doctor why you're tracking and what tracking tools you could use.
3. Learn as much about asthma self-care as you can	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ask your doctor to recommend educational resources, such as medical books and Internet sites with appropriate asthma information.- Consult groups like the American Lung Association.

When you find choices in your asthma ground rules, you do two important things:

- **First**, you find the choices you need to stay motivated.
- **Second**, you customize your asthma treatment to your life, making it easier to stick with it, and potentially making asthma control more likely.



Help your doctor help you.

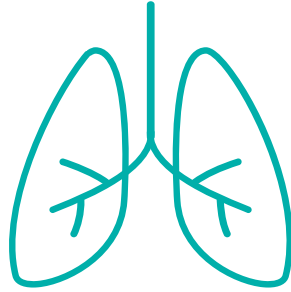
If you have a doctor's appointment coming up, be sure to keep your appointment. And if you don't have an appointment scheduled, you may want to make one.

Here are a few tips that may help you get even more from your appointment:

- **Be clear with your priorities:** Asthma is a complex condition, but even so, your time may be limited in your appointment. Help make the most of your time by listing out your questions ahead of time in order of importance. Using a [Doctor Discussion Guide](#) may also help you to prioritize. That way, if you can't get to all your questions, you can be sure to cover your most important ones first. For any questions you don't have time for, ask your doctor if someone else in the office can help.

- **Be confident:** Never forget that you know your body best. So even if you can't always find the right words to talk about certain symptoms or any other aspect of your asthma care, don't give up trying to explain what's going on. Sometimes all it takes is a few tries to make yourself understood.
- **Be focused on teamwork:** Many doctors work with a team of professionals to help their patients with asthma. Nurses, respiratory therapists, physician assistants, nurse educators—they may all be part of the team that's devoted to helping you keep your asthma better controlled. So, make the most of your relationship with everyone on your doctor's team. Each team member has specialized knowledge that you can benefit from.





We hope this guide was helpful.

Being better informed about your asthma is a great way to better manage it. If you are looking for more resources or information on asthma, visit asthma.com for helpful tools and information.

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