

## Managing your asthma

Having asthma does not mean having symptoms every day and not being able to do the things you or your family enjoy. In most cases, asthma can be well managed.

Managing asthma is a partnership between you and your health care team. You have an active role to play in knowing about asthma, understanding treatment options and making choices about the management of the condition.

The following steps are important in assisting you to manage your, your child's or any family member's asthma:

- Learn about asthma
- Identify and avoid triggers
- Make the most of asthma medications
- Know and have an Asthma Action Plan
- Have regular asthma check ups

### Learn about asthma

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While it is important that you find out from your local doctor or specialist how severe your asthma is, you also need to know the pattern of the asthma and recognise when it is changing.

You can learn about asthma by keeping a diary of symptoms or monitoring peak flow measurements. A doctor may organise a Spirometry test (a test that involves blowing into a machine) to measure how your lungs are working. By knowing more about asthma you may have a better understanding of how to treat and manage it.

### Identify and avoid triggers

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Find out which substances, odours or irritants set off your asthma symptoms and try to avoid them. These triggers could be:

- House dust, pollens, animal fur or moulds
- Tobacco smoke
- Things around the workplace or school, like wood dust, flour dust, chemical fumes and animals
- Food preservatives, colourings and monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Air pollution and respiratory infections, such as colds or bronchitis, commonly trigger asthma but are difficult to avoid.

Exercise can trigger symptoms in up to 80% of people with asthma but generally should not be avoided.

This can usually be easily controlled by taking asthma medications as prescribed and by following a warm up and cool down protocol prior to activity. Your doctor can advise on the best exercise plan.

### Make the most of asthma medications

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Inhaled medications are most often used for asthma. There are two types of inhaled medication that a doctor might prescribe:

- The "preventer" (such as Qvar, Pulmicort, Alvesco, Flixotide or Intal) is the main medication that keeps asthma as controlled as possible. It reduces the swelling, inflammation and mucus in the lungs. Your preventer will only work if it is taken daily
- The "reliever" (such as Bricanyl, Epaq, Ventolin, Airomir and Asmol) is called a bronchodilator. These medications "open" the airways and assist breathing. Relievers are used whenever there are asthma symptoms. Everyone with asthma should have a reliever puffer

### Know your action plan

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Research shows that having a written Asthma Action Plan, regular medical check ups and monitoring asthma symptoms will reduce:

- Hospital emergency visits
- Hospital stays
- Unscheduled visits to the doctor
- The number of school days lost due to asthma

Together with your doctor you can work out a written plan so that you can:

- Recognise when your asthma is getting worse
- Know how to treat it quickly
- Know how and where to get the right medical assistance

Early attention to worsening asthma may prevent a serious attack. Ask your doctor for an Asthma Action Plan.

Have your asthma checked regularly. Asthma can usually be kept under control. Follow a management plan and see a doctor for regular check-ups at least once every 6 months, not just in emergencies.

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# Managing your asthma (continued)

## The asthma cycle of care

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To ensure you receive the best possible treatment, the Australian Government has introduced the Asthma Cycle of Care.

This program is designed to assist you and your GP to update and review your asthma management. It includes an assessment of severity and lung function, development of a written Asthma Action Plan and review of medications.

Ask Asthma Foundation SA or your GP for further information.

## Courses and information available from Asthma Foundation SA

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The Live Well courses are presented in an informal group setting and last 2 hours. These courses incorporate information on specific conditions combined with tips to manage the condition well. Courses run most months and include:

- *Live Well with Asthma*
- *Live Well with Allergies and Anaphylaxis*
- *Live Well with Eczema*
- *Live Well with Chronic Lung Conditions*

## More information

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For more information contact  
Asthma Foundation SA:

Freecall **1800 645 130**  
[asthmasa.org.au](http://asthmasa.org.au)

**300 South Road, Hilton, 5033**