

Diagnosed with Asthma

When you are first diagnosed with asthma it can be a time of uncertainty.

You may have been provided with lots of information all at one time and feel as though you can't remember anything! This can also be the case if you have just had a child diagnosed with asthma.

What is asthma?

Asthma is a disease of the small airways affecting up to 1 in 6 children and 1 in 9 adults. People with asthma have sensitive airways in their lungs. When exposed to triggers such as pollens and dust, the airways become inflamed, mucus is produced and muscles around the airway tighten. This is called an asthma attack.

An asthma attack can occur at anytime, can be life threatening but is usually reversible with medication.

There isn't a cure for asthma, but in most cases asthma can be well managed so you can continue doing the things you like. Scuba diving is the only activity not advised for people with asthma.

Medications for Asthma

Asthma is treated with puffers or inhalers. The puffers/inhalers are available in three groups: Relievers are blue or grey and work within 2 - 4 minutes; Preventers are usually Autumn coloured and work after several weeks; Symptom Controllers are usually green and work within 40 minutes but last for 12 hours. You may be prescribed only one puffer/inhaler or you may have a combination of all three.

Everyone with asthma should have a blue or grey reliever puffer/inhaler.

Sometimes, people with specific needs may be prescribed tablets as well.

Asthma Checklist to Help you Breathe Better

✓ **Call the Asthma Foundation of South Australia to talk to a Respiratory Advisor.**

The Breathe Better Health Line **1800 645 130** is a free service provided by the Asthma Foundation of South Australia. Respiratory Advisors are available Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm to help with your enquiries.

✓ **Learn Asthma First Aid**

Asthma First Aid is taught at the Foundation.

✓ **Know what your BLUE puffer is for.**

A Blue puffer (or reliever puffer) is used to relieve the symptoms of asthma (shortness of breath, tightness in the chest, coughing).

It works within 4 minutes & lasts up to 4 hours.

✓ **Know what your AUTUMN coloured puffer is for.**

Autumn coloured (or preventer puffers) reduce the swelling inside the airways and clear up the mucus.

They need to be taken everyday as prescribed by your doctor

and take a few weeks to reach their full effect.

You will notice after a few weeks that your symptoms are reduced and you do not need to take your blue puffer as often. Always rinse out your mouth well and spit out after using your preventer.

✓ **Book into a Live Well with Asthma program**

The 'Live Well with Asthma' program is an introduction to asthma management conducted by a Respiratory Advisor. This is an informative 2 hour session designed to improve your asthma knowledge and therefore enable you to acquire skills to manage your asthma.

✓ **Quit smoking**

The **Quitline** is always available on **131 848** or speak to your local GP.

✓ **Become a member of the Asthma Foundation of South Australia.**

The Foundation is a not-for-profit charity that relies on members, fundraising & donors to continue its work including the Breathe Better Health Line.

Members receive regular information including magazines and are entitled to many benefits. To join the Foundation log on to our website www.asthmasa.org.au, visit us at 300 South Road Hilton, email info@asthmasa.org.au or phone us on 8238 9300.

✓ **Things to look at now**

Ensure that you have a written Asthma Action Plan, developed in conjunction with your doctor. The plan details your asthma management regime when you are well, when your asthma is getting worse and what to do in an emergency.

✓ **Peak Flow Monitoring and Charting**

An effective way to monitor your asthma is by taking peak flow readings. This simple, portable device is available from the Foundation and works in conjunction with your written Action Plan. Peak flow diaries are available free of charge from the Foundation.

✓ **Device Technique**

It is important that you take your medications correctly and regularly. Sometimes the device that you have been provided with may not be the best one for you, or you may not be using it correctly. Ask your local Doctor or Asthma Foundation Respiratory Advisor to check your technique.

✓ **Regular Reviews**

Research has shown that your asthma is best controlled when there is an Action Plan in place and your asthma is regularly reviewed by your doctor.

For further information, contact:

Asthma Foundation of South Australia:

Phone our Breathe Better Health Line on 1800 645 130

Visit us at 300 South Road Hilton

Log on to our website at www.asthmasa.org.au

Email info@asthmasa.org.au

