



Asthma: what is it?

Information to improve your health from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama

Asthma is a chronic lung condition involving inflamed or narrowing airways which can make it very hard to breathe. During an asthma attack, you may feel like your chest is constricting and experience severe coughing and/or wheezing. Asthma attack triggers may include changes in air temperature, allergens, upper respiratory infections, various irritants in the environment and exercise.

Asthma and You

Prevention is always the best medicine.

To help control your asthma symptoms, it's important to stay educated and take proactive steps. Learn to identify what triggers your asthma. Know what questions to ask your doctor. Exercise, but understand the realities of exercise-induced asthma. Take your maintenance medicines as prescribed by your doctor, and have an asthma action plan ready in case of emergency.

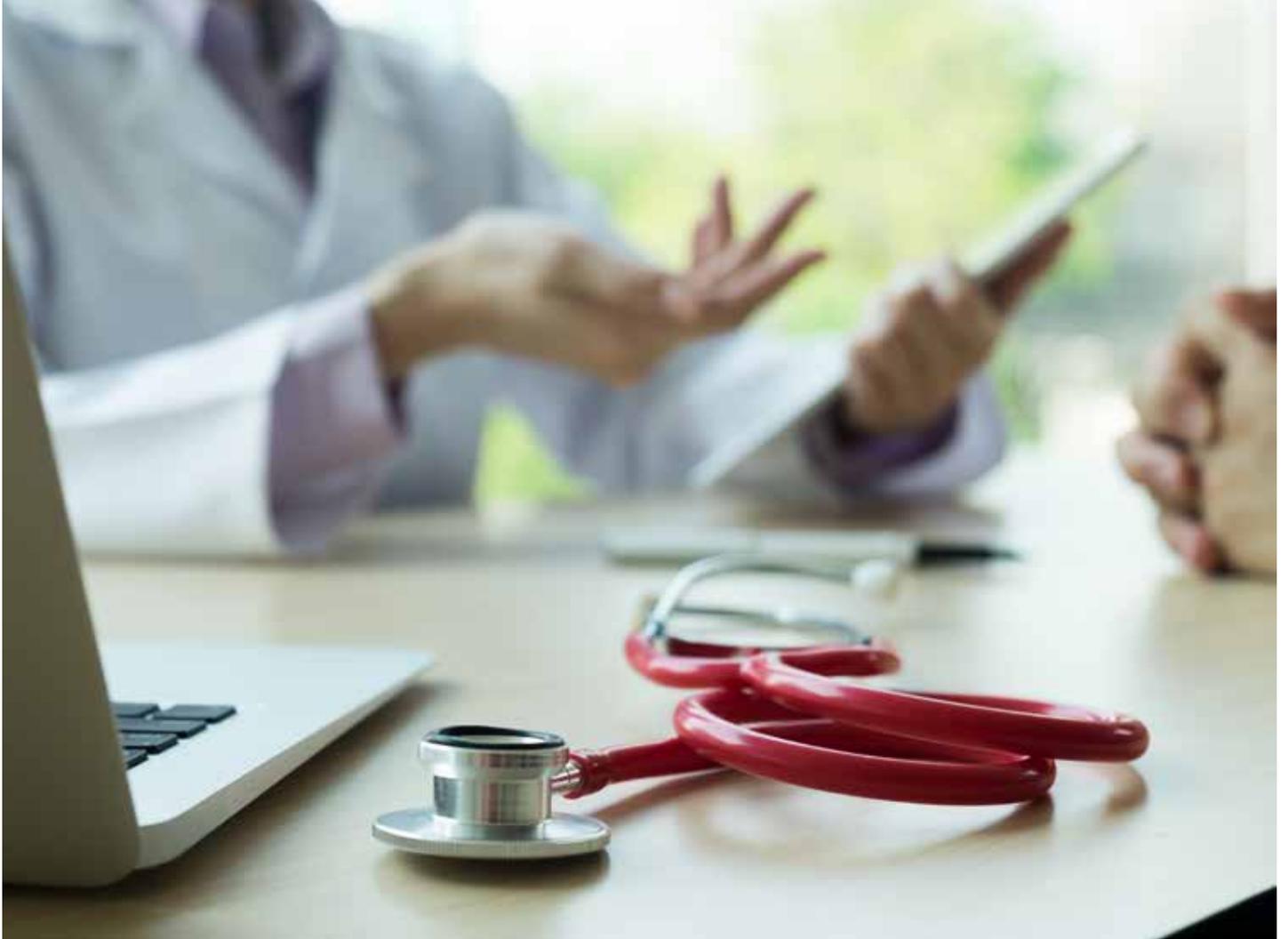
The purpose of this newsletter is to help you control your asthma. We hope you find this information helpful.

Thank you for reading!



This information is provided for general informational purposes. Information contained in this communication is not intended to replace professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified healthcare provider regarding your healthcare needs. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking medical advice because of something you have read in this informational piece. Always check your benefits for coverage information and limitations. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

AlabamaBlue.com



Talk to your doctor

Do you have a doctor's visit coming up?

If so, it's always good to be prepared. Here are a few questions you can ask your doctor to get the most out of your visit.

Am I taking the right medicines?

It's always good to bring a list of your current medicines and any supplements you take so your doctor can see how these work together. In addition, you might want to show your doctor how you use your inhaler to make sure you're taking your medicine correctly.

Can you help me create an asthma action plan?

This is a plan to help control asthma symptoms, prevent flare-ups, and ensure you know what to do or where to go for help in case of an asthma attack.

Am I up-to-date on my vaccinations?

Every year, you should get a flu vaccination. Your doctor may recommend additional vaccinations based on your individual needs, or it may simply be time to receive a booster.

Do you recommend any additional preventive services?

Your doctor may recommend additional preventive services such as mammograms, colonoscopies or bone density scans based on your needs and health requirements.

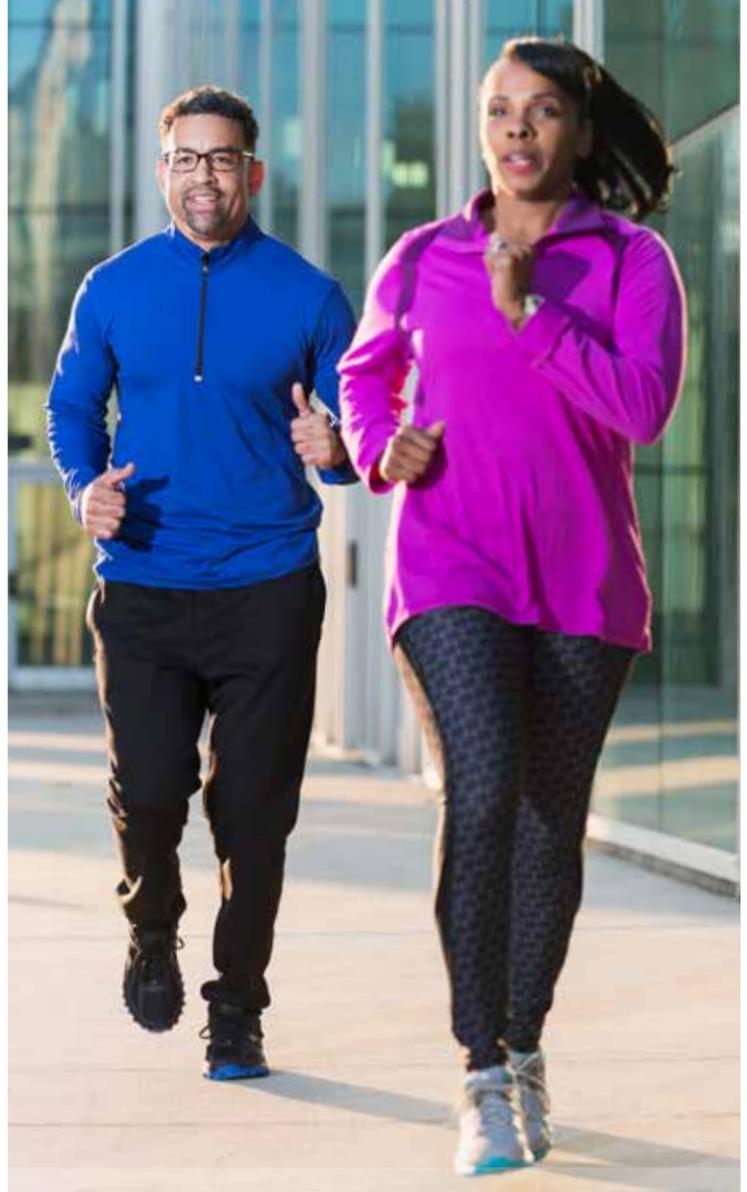
It's important to come prepared for every doctor's appointment. If you've been diagnosed with asthma, be sure to ask about the following:

- Lung function test
- Lifestyle issues such as smoking, diet and exercise

Do you know the risk factors for developing asthma?

7 Asthma Risk Factors

- 1 Family history**
Asthma often runs in the family.
- 2 Viral infections**
Some infants or children exposed to certain respiratory viral infections may grow up to have chronic asthma.
- 3 Allergies**
Allergic reactions can irritate the tissue of the lungs.
- 4 Workplace Exposure**
Being exposed to certain chemicals or particulates can cause asthma. These include: breathing in cleaning supplies, wood dust, chemical vapors, and molds.
- 5 Air pollution**
People in cities or other urban areas where the air is choked with smog may be more likely to develop asthma.
- 6 Smoking**
Smoking irritates your lungs. Anyone who smokes – or is simply exposed to smoke – is at a higher risk of experiencing asthma. So if you or a loved one smokes, quit!
- 7 Obesity**
The reason is unclear, but many studies have found obesity increases incidences of asthma. In addition, those who carry extra weight often require more medicines, have worse symptoms and complications, and experience more difficulty controlling asthma than people with a healthy weight.



Smart Exercising when you have asthma

While exercise is good for you, for some people, it can cause an asthma flare-up. People with asthma often experience an increase in symptoms during exercise. Even people without chronic asthma may develop exercise-induced asthma.

However, exercise-induced asthma isn't an excuse to not exercise! The benefits of exercise outweigh the risks. Regular exercise makes your body stronger and increases aerobic capacity.

On the next page are some steps you can take to reduce your risk of exercise-induced asthma.

Asthma Triggers

They are conditions that increase your chances of having an asthma attack. Knowing how to avoid them can prevent future problems.



Foods	Food allergies may trigger reactions.
Medicines	Some over-the-counter pain medications like aspirin and other anti-inflammatory medicines have been known to affect asthma.
Pollen and Air Pollution	Particles in the air can affect your breathing. If you have asthma, check the air quality index so you know what to expect before you walk out the door.
Temperatures	Sudden changes in temperature and extreme cold can irritate your airways.
Animals and Pests	Pet fur and saliva can affect people with pet allergies. So can pests like dust mites, roaches and rodents. If you have pets, vacuum frequently and keep your animals clean. For pests, use allergy reducing pillow and bed covers, take your trash outside frequently, fix leaks, and vacuum and dust weekly.
Mold	Reduce mold by having someone remove any molds you can see, throwing out items that contain mold and keeping your house dry. Consider using a dehumidifier if your home is in moist conditions.
Medical Conditions	The common cold and flu are just a few viruses that can make asthma symptoms worse. Avoid viruses and harmful bacteria by washing hands frequently, and remember to get the flu shot once a year.
Strong Scents	Scented candles, deodorizers, colognes and perfumes can all set off asthma attacks. Limit your exposure to strong smells and ask others around you to be considerate when it comes to strong scents.
Smoke	Smoke and second-hand smoke irritates your airways. If you or a loved one smokes, it's best to quit. If that's not feasible, be sure to never allow smoke inside where you live.

How to avoid exercise-induced asthma

Talk to your doctor and take your medicine as prescribed. Your doctor may even suggest changing how you take your medicine. For example, they may suggest using an inhaler prior to exercising to prevent attacks.

Warm up prior to exercising. Take your time, pay attention to your breathing, and ease into your workouts.

Cool down after exercising.

Exercise indoors during extremely hot or cold weather. Frigid air specifically can constrict airways so it's hard to breathe.

Restrict exercise if you're sick. If you have a cold, flu or respiratory virus, avoid exercise until you feel better.

Check the air quality index for pollen or pollutants before heading outside to work out.

We offer members a support system to help manage any chronic condition, as well as preventive measures to take better care of yourself. Call **1-888-841-5741** for more information on these services.

Consider us your support system.

We're here to help you manage your chronic condition. And we can suggest preventive measures that will help you take better care of yourself.

Connect with your Care Coordinator today.

Call **1-888-841-5741** for more information on these services.

