



# Managing Your Asthma

Asthma is a chronic, inflammatory illness of the airways. Although asthma usually cannot be cured, it can be controlled with proper management.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO STAY HEALTHY?

Visit your primary doctor, allergy and/or pulmonary specialist at least two times a year to discuss your:

- **Asthma Action Plan**  
Talk about how it's working and if it needs to be updated.
- **Medications**  
Make sure you know what your medicines are, how often you should take them, how to use them properly, and what results to expect.
- **Symptoms**  
Talk about how often you have them and what triggers them. Make sure you know the early warning signs of an attack and what to do if one occurs.
- **Lung Function**  
Ask if you should get a simple, painless test (called spirometry) to find out how your lungs are working.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF MY ASTHMA IS OUT OF CONTROL?

Ask yourself three questions:

1. Do you take your quick-relief inhaler more than two times per week?
2. Do you wake up at night with asthma symptoms more than two times per month?
3. Do you refill your quick-relief inhaler more than two times per year?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then your asthma may not be well controlled. Discuss your symptoms with your doctor to determine if your treatment plan is working or if it might be time for a change.

## MEDICATIONS USED TO TREAT ASTHMA

Although asthma can not usually be cured, there are two kinds of medications used to control asthma:

- **Controller medications** – taken regularly they keep symptoms and attacks from starting.
- **Reliever or quick-relief medications** – work to quickly treat an attack or relieve symptoms.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

### Asthma Supplies

Ask your doctor if you might benefit from using a spacer or peak flow meter. A **spacer** attaches to some inhalers and holds the medicine in the chamber long enough for you to inhale. A **peak flow meter** is a simple device that can warn you of asthma problems even before you feel the symptoms. Spacers and peak flow meters are available at participating pharmacies and durable medical equipment vendors with a prescription from your doctor.



### Asthma Action Plan

For a free, downloadable copy of an Asthma Action Plan go to [www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/asthma/brochures.htm](http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/asthma/brochures.htm). To develop your own Asthma Action Plan, bring the plan with you when you visit your doctor. The plan includes what to do every day to prevent symptoms, and also what to do if symptoms worsen. Keep a copy of the Asthma Action Plan with you at all times. If your child suffers from asthma, be sure to give a copy to teachers and babysitters.

## LEARN MORE

### Independent Health's Healthwise® Tool

Healthwise is an online health management tool that offers you a variety of ways to help you take charge of your personal fitness and lifestyle goals. Healthwise offers health information, programs and tools that address each of your special health needs. Visit Healthwise at [independenthealth.com](http://independenthealth.com) under "Tools, Forms & More."

### New York State Smokers' Quitline

Independent Health knows that quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health, but we also realize that it is one of the most difficult habits to break. The best place to start is the New York State Smokers' Quitline. The toll-free number is **1-866-697-8487** or **1-866-NYQUITS**, or visit the website at [nysmokefree.com](http://nysmokefree.com).

### American Lung Association

Visit [lung.org](http://lung.org) to learn more about managing lung disease.

## TOOLS & RESOURCES

From health tips and guidelines that help you stay informed, to useful online and mobile tools that help make it easier to manage your health, Independent Health has the tools and resources you need to lead a healthier life.

**To learn more, visit the "My Health" section at [independenthealth.com](http://independenthealth.com).**

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