

NHP's asthma care management program

Take control of your asthma



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Neighborhood
Health Plan™

NHP's Asthma Program

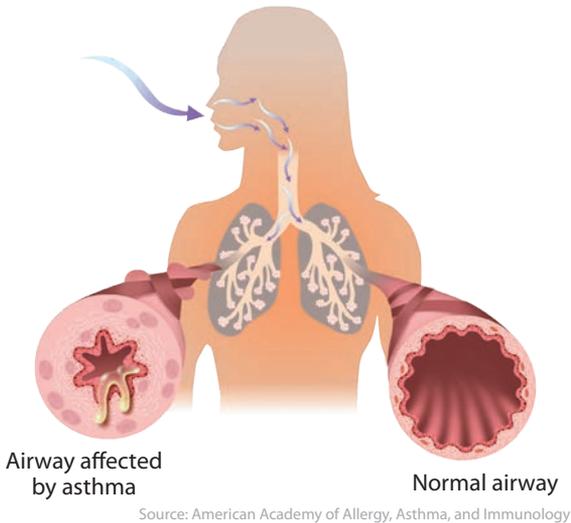
The Neighborhood Health Plan asthma program helps you and your doctor take charge of your asthma.

- Our asthma care managers will work with you and your doctor or nurse to find the treatment plan that works for you. Please call Customer Service to let them know the best way for an asthma care manager to reach you. The telephone number is on the back of your NHP member ID card.
- We can also have a health care professional visit you at your home to teach you about asthma and what things make it worse.
- We can send you a DVD called "How to use your asthma medication" with video clips showing you the right way to use your medication delivery device (like a diskus or inhaler) so you get the full dose of medicine in your lungs.
- We encourage members who take medication for preventing asthma symptoms to use the Access 90 program which allows you to get a 3 month supply of asthma control medicines like Flovent®, Advair®, Symbicort®, Pulmicort®, and Singulair®. This makes it easier to follow your medication plan.

What is Asthma?

Asthma is an ongoing airway disease that makes it hard to breathe. Asthma affects the airways in your lungs. Airways are the tubes inside your lungs. When you have asthma, air moving in and out of your lungs may be blocked by:

- Swelling of the airways
- Muscles squeezing around the airways



Know the early warning signs and symptoms of asthma

Swelling and tightness narrow the airways. This leads to any or all of the following asthma early warning signs and symptoms:

Early warning signs:

- First signs of a cough or cold
- Waking up at night with asthma symptoms
- Trouble playing or exercising

Symptoms:

- Coughing
- Chest tightness
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing



Controlling your asthma

Don't let your asthma control you.

You should control your asthma. When your asthma is controlled you should expect to:

- Do all your daily activities
- Sleep through the night
- Not miss school or work because of asthma
- Be free of emergency room visits or hospital admissions due to your asthma
- Play and exercise without asthma symptoms

Getting Control

- Make an asthma action plan with your doctor.
- Follow your asthma action plan
- Take asthma medicines exactly as your doctor tells you
- Learn and avoid your asthma triggers
- Know your early warning signs of worsening asthma

Medicines

Following your asthma plan is the key to asthma control. By taking your medicine as prescribed by your doctor, you can:

- Take control of you asthma and feel better
- Be fully active
- Have fewer asthma episodes
- Have fewer sick days
- Have fewer hospital visits

There are two main types of medicines: control and quick-relievers.

Control medicines

Take your controller medicine as recommended by your doctor. If your doctor has told you to take your controller medicine every day, do not stop using it without talking to your doctor first. Stopping your controller medicine too soon can make your asthma worse.

A controller medicine:

- Keeps asthma flares from starting
- Reduces the swelling in your lungs
- Is to be taken every day even if your breathing feels fine
- May also be called an anti-inflammatory

Controller medicines work slowly over days to stop the swelling in the airways that causes the symptoms of asthma.



Flovent®



Advair®



Symbicort®



Pulmicort®



Singular®

Quick Reliever Medicine

Reliever medicines help to stop asthma symptoms quickly once they have started. Reliever medicines:

- Work fast
- Relax the muscle in your airways
- Can be used before play and exercise
- But they DON'T CONTROL your asthma

Your quick relief medicine may make you feel better for a little while, but it is not treating the swelling in your airways. Getting by on only a quick relief medicine could put you in danger of having a dangerous asthma flare.

Some people need both quick reliever medicine and control medicine. Only you and your doctor can decide what medicines you should be taking for your asthma.



Proair®



Ventolin®



Your medicine matters

Take your medicine the way your doctor prescribes. It is the best way to control your asthma. Following your medicine plan is the key to asthma control. Here are a few tips to keep you on your medication plan:

- Have a regular routine when you take your controller medication (for example: before you brush your teeth in the morning and at bedtime).
- Know when you need to refill your medications. Keep track of the doses you have left before you run out.
- Make sure you are using your inhaler correctly. Poor technique may keep these medicines from helping your asthma.
- Talk with your doctor if you are having trouble taking your medications.

Asthma Control and Triggers

What is an asthma trigger?

An asthma trigger is anything that causes your asthma to get worse. Triggers vary from person to person. You may need to be tested to find out what triggers are causing your asthma symptoms.

Possible asthma triggers include:

- Dust
- Colds
- Pets
- Cold weather
- Rats or mice
- Pollen
- Cockroaches
- Stress
- Mold
- Strong odors
- Exercise
- Cigarette, cigar, or pipe smoke

Dust Mites

Dust mites are tiny bugs you can't see. They live in sheets, blankets, pillows, mattresses, soft furniture, carpets, and stuffed toys such as stuffed animals.

What you can do?

- Wash bed sheets and blankets once a week in hot water and dry them completely.
- Use dust-proof covers on pillows and mattresses.
- Use containers with lids to store books and toys.
- Dust with a damp cloth and vacuum carpets, rugs, and furniture often.
- Wash stuffed toys regularly and dry them completely. Do not use stuffed animals on your or your child's bed.

Mold

Mold grows on damp things such as shower curtains, bath items, tubs, basins, and tiles.

What you can do?

- If you see mold, clean it up with soap and water.
- Use exhaust fans or open a window in the bathroom when showering and the kitchen when cooking or washing dishes.
- Fix leaky plumbing or other sources of water as soon as possible.
- Dry damp or wet areas.
- If possible, use a dehumidifier.

Pests: cockroaches and mice

Cockroach and mice droppings may trigger asthma attacks.

What you can do?

- Keep counters, sinks, tables, and floors clean.
- Clean dishes, crumbs, and spills right away.
- Store food in air-tight containers.
- Empty trash every day and keep it in a closed container.
- Avoid sprays by using bait and traps.
- If you use bug spray, be sure there is plenty of ventilation.



Pets: cats and dogs

The urine and saliva from a warm-blooded animal like a dog or a cat may also trigger attacks.

What you can do?

- Keep pets outside if possible.
- If you have a pet inside, keep them out of the bedroom and off the furniture.
- Vacuum carpets and furniture often.

Strong odors

Chemical irritants found in some products in your house— such as scented or unscented products, including cleaners, paints, adhesives, pesticides, cosmetics, or air fresheners— may make your asthma worse. They can bother your asthma even though you are not allergic.

What you can do?

- Try to keep away from strong odors and sprays like perfumes, paint, incense, and cleaning products.
- Open windows or doors, or use an exhaust fan.
- Consider trying different products.
- Remember to always follow the directions on the label.

Secondhand smoke

Even if you are not smoking, you or your child's asthma can be triggered by the smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar, or by the smoke breathed out by a smoker.

What you can do?

- Don't smoke in your home or car
- Don't let anyone smoke near you or your child
- Pledge to make your home smoke free

NHP can help you quit smoking. Call the NHP Quit Smoking line at 617-204-1447 or toll free at 1-800-433-5556, extension 1447.

Did you know?

If you have asthma, smoking is especially dangerous because of the damage it does to your lungs. Smoking can cause asthma flare-ups and make your asthma medicines less effective.

**NHP can help you quit smoking.
Call the NHP Quit Smoking line
at 617-204-1447 or toll free at
1-800-433-5556, extension 1447.**



Quit smoking for your health and the health of those close to you.

Asthma management plan

An asthma action plan can be very helpful especially during an asthma flare up. Ask your doctor or nurse to fill out your asthma management (action) plan. Your asthma action plan can help you stay in charge of your asthma.

Your plan should tell you:

- What medicines to take
- How much to take
- When to take them
- When to get help

An action plan uses three color “zones” to help you decide what to do:

Green Zone	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No cough or wheeze, • No trouble sleeping • Can work and play 	<p>Your breathing is good. You should take your controller medications daily to keep flare-ups from starting.</p>
Yellow Zone	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cough or wheeze • Tight chest • Waking up at night • First sign of a cold 	<p>You’re having a flare-up. Take your “yellow zone” medications to keep your asthma from getting worse.</p>
Red Zone	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick reliever medications may not be helping • Breathing hard and fast • Can’t walk or talk well • Can’t stop coughing 	<p>You’re having a serious flare-up. Take your “red zone” medicines. GET HELP NOW!</p>

Know how to use your asthma devices

There are devices to help you manage your asthma. Practice using them. It is worth the time. The most common asthma devices are:

- Inhalers and spacers
- Nebulizers
- Dry powder inhalers

Ask your doctor how to use your devices. Have the doctor or nurse watch you use them during your visits.



Nebulizer



Nebulizer face mask



Spacer



Diskus



Dry powder inhaler

Call Customer Service to let them know the best way for an asthma care manager to reach you. The telephone number is on the back of your NHP member ID card.

You get the most from asthma medicines when you use them correctly, which means better asthma control.

Routine doctor visits

It is important to have routine asthma visits with your doctor.

Bring all your asthma medications and devices to the visit.

During these visits it's important to discuss asthma control and your asthma management plan.

Tell your doctor if:

- You have been to the emergency room or hospital because of your asthma
- You miss school or work due to asthma
- You have been waking at night with asthma symptoms
- You are using your albuterol on a daily basis
- You are having trouble taking your asthma control medications as directed

Talk to your Doctor about:

- Identifying your asthma triggers
- Preventing asthma flare ups
- Managing your asthma flare ups at home
- Creating an asthma management plan
- Medication device technique
- When to call your doctor
- Your Asthma Control Test Score:
Bring the test with you to your next doctor's appointment and talk to your doctor about your score.