

Breathe Easier with Asthma

ASTHMA IS CONTROLLABLE

You **don't have to** experience Asthma symptoms!
Total Asthma control **is possible** for most people!

YOU CAN LIVE SYMPTOM FREE!

With Your Asthma Controlled, You'll Be Able To:

- Participate in sports
- Sleep through the night
- Reduce or stop ER visits
- Need your rescue inhaler less



Healthy
Capital District

Get Covered • Find Care • Stay Healthy

HealthyCapitalDistrict.org

A Health Coach can help!
Call 518-462-7040

175 Central Avenue, 5th Fl., Albany NY 12006

If you suffer from breathing problems caused by asthma, this booklet is for you. As you read these pages, you'll learn what asthma is and why it needs to be treated. You'll also find out what to do when you have symptoms such as coughing, chest tightness, shortness of breath and wheezing and, how to avoid things that make asthma worse.

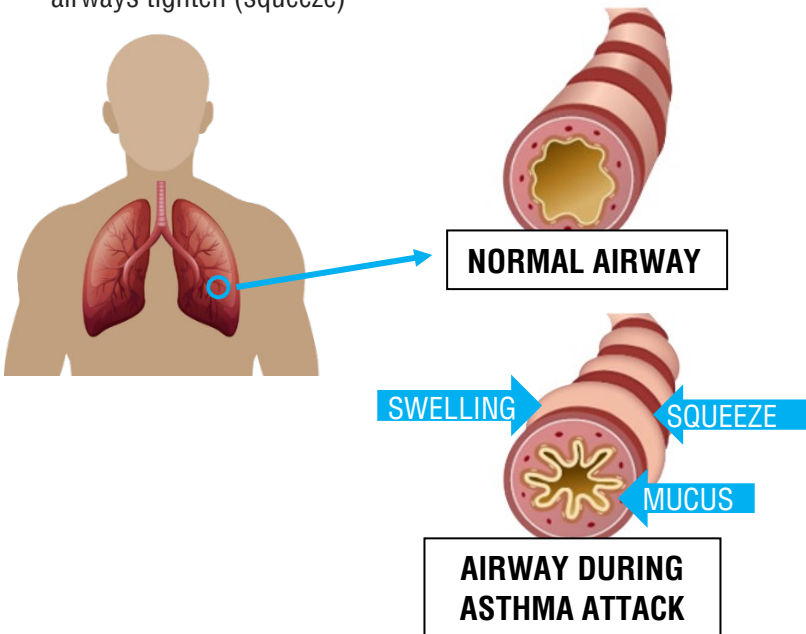
What is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease. In other words, there is no cure for it, you live with it every day. The good news is that by following the treatment plan provided by your primary care doctor, you'll be able to manage asthma and live a normal, healthy and active life!

How Does Asthma Work?

When an asthma trigger is breathed in, the body reacts by:

- Increasing mucous in the airway
- Increasing swelling (inflammation) in the airways
- Making the bands of muscles around the airways tighten (squeeze)



What Triggers Asthma?

There are two types of asthma triggers: Allergens and Irritants. Both trigger the same kinds of symptoms. Asthma triggers can cause a mild reaction (cough), moderate reaction (cough and wheezing) or a severe reaction (shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing and increased mucous).

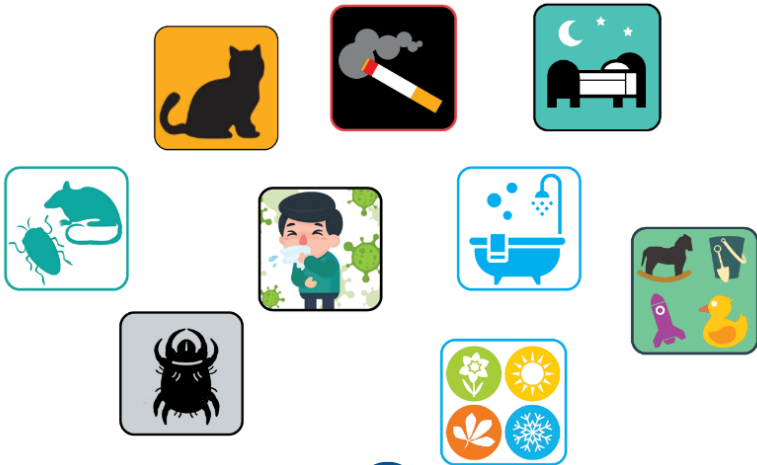
Allergens include:

- Animal dander
- Pollen
- Dust mites
- Pests waste
- Mold or mildew

Irritants include:

- Anything that is smoked
- Secondhand smoke
- Fireplace smoke or Kerosene Heater fumes
- Chemical odors (cleaning products, perfume, flowers or sprays)
- Pollution (car exhaust, diesel fumes)
- Dust

Asthma attacks can also be triggered by infections such as colds, flu or pneumonia.



Reducing Asthma Triggers at Home

The New York State Healthy Neighborhoods Program (HNP) helps people address asthma triggers and other housing related health issues. These services are provided **free of charge** by Community Health Workers and/or Public Health Nurses with specialized training in asthma.

The program provides in-home visits and help for asthma, smoking, indoor air quality, lead, fire safety, and other health hazards.



NEW YORK STATE
**Healthy
Neighborhood
Program**

One of the most important features of the home visit is to look for asthma triggers in the home and provide you with help to remove, reduce or avoid them. Quite often, **free** cleaning, safety, and health products are provided to help you and your family.

Research shows that home visits and reducing asthma triggers in the home can greatly improve the health of people with asthma. This often leads to reducing the need for emergency department visits or being admitted to the Hospital for asthma.



HealthyCapitalDistrict.org

A Health Coach can help!

A Health Coach at HCDI will gladly help arrange a referral to the Healthy Neighborhoods Program for you!

Call 518-462-7040 to find out more.



Controlling Asthma with Medications

The medications used to treat asthma symptoms work to eliminate the *swelling* and *relax the squeeze*. Usually, doctors will prescribe two medications to manage your asthma.

The first is an **EVERY DAY** medication that works to control **both** the swelling and the squeeze. Your doctor will also prescribe a **RESCUE** inhaler to use when you have **sudden** asthma symptoms.

Take **EVERY DAY** medications as your PCP has directed, **even when you are feeling fine**. These medications do not provide immediate relief, they work over time to control airway inflammation and help to prevent asthma symptoms.

Everyone with asthma needs a **RESCUE** inhaler to use **when you have sudden asthma symptoms**.

Patients that take their **EVERY DAY** medications, often see a decrease in the number of times they have sudden asthma symptoms, feel better and use their **RESCUE** inhaler less often.

TIP

Not sure which med is your **EVERY DAY** and which is **RESCUE**?

Ask your pharmacist to label them for you.



How to Measure Control of Asthma

Six out of ten people with asthma do not have good control of their disease. This may lead to severe, life-threatening asthma attacks and permanent lung damage. Poor control can often result in repeated visits to the Emergency Room, lost days from work or school, or an inability to be physically active. **No matter how long you've had asthma – you can enjoy your life more fully when your asthma is well controlled!**

Know your score! The Asthma Control Test™ (see below) is a simple tool that helps by providing a way to score how well your asthma symptoms (warning signs) are controlled. Scoring your asthma will help you and your primary care doctor adjust your treatment plan. Take the Asthma Control Test on a regular basis and whenever you're not feeling well.

Step 1: Write the number of each answer to every question in the score box provided.

Step 2: Add up each score box for the total.

Step 3: No matter what the score, **bring your test results to your doctor** at each visit.

If your score is between 16 and 19, your asthma symptoms may not be as well controlled as they could be. Review and avoid triggers, take your medications as directed and continue to monitor your score.

If your score is 15 or less, your asthma is likely poorly controlled. Please contact your healthcare provider right away. There may be more you and your primary care doctor could do to help control your asthma symptoms.



1. In the past 4 weeks, how much of the time did your asthma keep you from getting as much done at work, school or at home?

All of the time	1	Most of the time	2	Some of the time	3	A little of the time	4	None of the time	5
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2. During the past 4 weeks, how often have you had shortness of breath?

More than once a day	1	Once a day	2	3 to 6 times a week	3	Once or twice a week	4	Not at all	5
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3. During the past 4 weeks, how often did your asthma symptoms (wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, chest tightness or pain) wake you up at night or earlier than usual in the morning?

4 or more nights a week	1	2 or 3 nights a week	2	Once a week	3	Once or twice	4	Not at all	5
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4. During the past 4 weeks, how often have you used your rescue inhaler or nebulizer medication (such as albuterol)?

3 or more times per day	1	1 or 2 times per day	2	2 or 3 times per week	3	Once a week or less	4	Not at all	5
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5. How would you rate your asthma control during the past 4 weeks?

Not controlled at all	1	Poorly controlled	2	Somewhat controlled	3	Well controlled	4	Completely controlled	5
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SCORE

TOTAL



Primary Care Doctor or Emergency Room?



Chronic medical conditions such as asthma, require ongoing care coordination with your primary care doctor.

By working closely with your primary care doctor, you can reduce (and often eliminate) the need to visit the emergency department or urgent care for your asthma. The Emergency Room provides care for your immediate needs. It doesn't help you with preventing emergencies or improving your asthma control like your primary care doctor does.

Tip: Ask your primary care doctor if you can get same-day or next-day office appointment when your breathing becomes harder, and when you should go to urgent care or the emergency room for your asthma.

Go to the Emergency Room if you are having serious trouble breathing and your rescue medication is not providing relief. Be sure to schedule a follow up visit with your primary care doctor within two weeks of going to the Emergency Room.



Things You Can Do To Improve Your Quality of Life NOW

1. Work with your primary care doctor to manage your asthma and improve your asthma control score.
2. Get a Healthy Neighborhoods home visit to reduce asthma triggers.
3. Take your medications **EVERY DAY** medications as prescribed, even if your breathing is fine – **do not stop or make changes unless your doctor tells you to.**

