

# Regular Doctor Visit for Asthma

**What is asthma?** Asthma is a long-term condition that causes your airways to become inflamed and narrow. This can cause wheezing, coughing, chest tightness and trouble breathing, especially early in the morning or at night.

## How do I control my symptoms?

- Avoid triggers (things that cause an asthma attack)
- Stop smoking
- Know when and how to take your medicines
- Keep track of your symptoms
- Peak flow meter (A small, handheld device that when used daily can show how well air moves out of your lungs)
  - **Asthma diary** - Record peak flow readings, symptoms, and medications taken
- Exercise - Start slow with your exercise plan to avoid irritation of your airways
  - 30 minutes daily can strengthen your heart and lungs, which helps relieve asthma symptoms

## What can I do to avoid triggers?

- **Use your air conditioner/keep windows closed** Reduces pollen in the air, lowers indoor humidity, and reduces your exposure to dust mites
- **Keep your space clean** Encase pillows, mattresses and box springs in dust-proof covers, remove carpeting, install hardwood/linoleum flooring and wash curtains and blinds
- **Keep indoor air clean** Change the filters in your furnace and air conditioner regularly
- **Reduce pet dander** Avoid pets with fur or feathers or bathe pets regularly
- **If it's cold out, cover your face.** If your asthma is worsened by cold, dry air, wearing a face mask can help
- **Avoid certain medications** (i.e. aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen)
- **Emotions and anxiety** Proper rest, diet and exercise are important for your overall health and can help in managing your asthma

## When should I get immediate help?

- Your rescue medicine doesn't relieve your symptoms
- Your peak flow keeps dropping after treatment or falls below 50% of your best
- Your fingernails or lips turn gray or blue
- You have trouble walking or talking
- You have extreme difficulty breathing
- Your neck, chest or ribs are pulling in with each breathe

**Why is it important to have my health check-up and tests done?** Communicating with your doctor is important in understanding and controlling your asthma. See your doctor at least twice a year for your asthma, even if you are feeling good. These visits will help both of you to keep track of your asthma and make changes in your treatment as needed.

## What should my doctor check at each 6 month visit?

- Ask about your symptoms
- Perform a physical exam and listen to your lungs
- Check your lung function (possibly spirometry or pulse oximetry)
- Ask about your medications
- Ask for or update your Asthma Action Plan

**How should I get ready for my next appointment?** Preparation for your asthma visit with your doctor can make your visit more efficient, effective and helpful. **Try these tips to get the most out of your visit:**

- Make a list of any important medical issue changes that have occurred since your last visit
- Make a list of all of your medications and asthma medication tools
- Bring your asthma diary/peak flow recordings
- Make a list of concerns/challenges you have about your asthma

Reference: [www.medscape.com](http://www.medscape.com) and [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com), accessed 3/10.