ASTHMA

Asthma is a disease that affects the air passages in the lungs. Asthma sufferers may experience attacks or episodes of difficult breathing because their airways are very sensitive.

SYMPTOMS:
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing gets harder and may hurt.
- Wheezing
- Tightness in the chest
- A cough that lasts more than a week

COMMON TRIGGERS:
- Upper respiratory infections (cold, flu, sinus infections, bronchitis)
- Allergens (dust, pollen, molds, pet dander)
- Environmental irritants (perfumes, air fresheners, smoke, air pollution, etc.)
- Sulfites (additives found in some foods and wine)
- Changes in temperature or cold air
- Exercise
- Certain medications
- Strong feelings, such as laughing or crying
- Hormonal changes

Note: If you have asthma, get an annual flu shot.

SELF-CARE

Along with prescribed medications:
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Avoid smoking.
- Vacuum and dust often.
- Use allergen proof bedding. Wash pillows and bedding often.
- Use curtains and rugs that can be washed often.
- Reduce clutter in your room.
- Use an air filter/purifier.
- Use an air conditioner in the summer if possible.
- Stop exercising if you start wheezing.
- Talk to your health care provider about over-the-counter medications.
- Keep asthma medicines/treatments handy and refilled.
- During an asthma attack, sit up, keep calm, and focus on breathing slow and easy. Get medical attention as needed.

Asthma: What Kind of Care Do I Need?

Do you have asthma with any of the following:
- Blue lips or fingernails
- Extreme shortness of breath
- Listlessness or severe weakness
- Dizziness or fainting
- Wheezing and you are currently taking steroid medicine or that doesn’t stop after treatment
- Coughing so much you can’t take a breath
- A fever with heavy breathing
- Can’t walk up a flight of stairs
- Can’t sleep or eat

Is your peak expiratory flow rate (PEFR) on the Peak Flow Zone system below 50% of your personal best number?

Do you have asthma and use the Peak Flow Zone system and your PEFR is 50 to 80% of your personal best number?

Do you have asthma and have symptoms at rest, with exercise, early in the morning, or at night?

Do you have asthma and the following problems:
- Breathing faster than usual or it is harder to breathe
- Shortness of breath occurs more often
- A cough which keeps you up at night
- An asthma attack does not respond to prescribed medication like it used to
- Asthma attacks are more frequent and/or are getting worse
- Less able to perform daily activities?

Do you use your bronchodilator more than 2 times a week?

Do you have asthma and need medicine refills?