

## Preventing asthma episodes and controlling your asthma

When you have asthma, having an asthma management plan is the best way to prevent symptoms. An asthma management plan is something given to you from your doctor to help you control your asthma, instead of your asthma controlling you.

### The plan should allow you to:

- ✓ Be active without having asthma symptoms
- ✓ Fully take part in workouts and sports
- ✓ Sleep all night, without asthma symptoms
- ✓ Be able to go to school or work
- ✓ Have the clearest lungs possible
- ✓ Have a few or no reaction from the asthma medication
- ✓ Have no ER visits or stays in the hospital
- ✓ Refill your medications before you run out

## Four parts of your asthma management plan:

### 1 Know your asthma triggers and stay away from them.

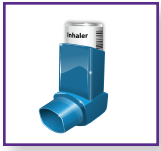
Staying away from your triggers is the best way to reduce your need for medications and to prevent asthma episodes. But first, you have to learn what those triggers are. Anytime you have an asthma episode, think about where you were and what you were doing the past day or so.

#### Answer questions like these in a notebook or on your calendar:

- Was I near cigarette smoke?
- Was I dusting or vacuuming?
- Was I near an animal?
- Did I have cold or other sickness?
- Was I running, playing or exercising?
- Was I upset, excited or tired?

Get your medications refilled before you run out. Do not go to the ER to fill your medications.

## 2 Take your asthma medications the right way.



- Ask your provider to watch you and check if you are doing it right. If it is still hard to use, you can ask your provider for a spacer or holding chamber. This device attaches to the inhaler to help the medications reach the lungs.
- Many people with asthma have at least two different medications. Be sure you know how and when to take your medications before you leave your provider's office. If you need extra help with how to take your medications, you can go to your local pharmacy and ask the pharmacist for help.

If your provider gives you medications to take each day, make sure you do that to prevent asthma symptoms.

## 3 Take the attached Asthma Action Plan to your provider to have him or her fill it out with you.

- Use your Asthma Action Plan as a guide for when you need to take your medications or when you might need to call your doctor or the Nurse Advice Line (if after clinic hours).

The Nurse Advice Line is available for you to call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This is a free service for HPSM members only. The Nurse Advice Line number is **1-866-535-6977**.

## 4 Track your asthma and know early warning signs that it may be getting worse.

- Asthma episodes almost never start without warning. Some people feel early symptoms, including: coughing, chest tightness or hearing wheezing in the lungs.
- Airways to the lungs narrow slowly, you may not feel symptoms until your airways are badly blocked. The key to taking care of your asthma is following your Asthma Action Plan and taking your medication as directed by your provider.

Review your *Asthma Action Plan* to check to see what medications you need to take or if you need call your doctor, the Nurse Advice Line or **911**. If it is an emergency, call **911** right away.