Manage asthma in four ways

If you have asthma, it doesn’t have to stop you from doing things you enjoy. Here are four steps for keeping asthma under control:

1. **Make it a team effort.**
   Don’t try to manage your asthma on your own. Partnering with your doctor is the key to success.

2. **Keep a record of your symptoms.**
   What time did your breathing worsen? What were you doing when you began wheezing? Where were you? Track this for several days — or even a week. Then take your record to your doctor.

3. **Work on an asthma action plan.**
   Your symptom record will help your doctor figure out what triggers your asthma. Is it dust? Pollen? Cats? Avoiding triggers is a big part of your asthma action plan. Your plan should also include steps to take when symptoms worsen.

4. **Mind your medicines.**
   Taking your asthma medicines the right way can help you feel better and have fewer flare-ups. Make sure your action plan tells you what medicines to take and when to take them. Then follow those directions every day.

What does an asthma action plan look like? Download a sample at www.morehealth.org/asthma.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians (www.familydoctor.org); National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (www.nhlbi.nih.gov)
Asthma: Get the pneumonia vaccine

What does asthma have to do with pneumonia?

Plenty, it turns out. If you have asthma, it raises your risk for pneumonia. Pneumonia is a lung infection caused by a bacteria called pneumococcus. This bacteria can lead to infections of the:
- Brain
- Spinal cord
- Blood
- Ears

These infections can be quite serious. They can put you in the hospital. They can even be deadly.

Avoid the disease

These germs can spread from person to person. Anyone can catch them. For instance, you could get sick if someone coughs or sneezes close to you. Even people who look healthy can spread germs to you.

This is why people with asthma should get the pneumonia vaccine. You don’t need a shot each year. You may only need to get it once or twice. Keep in mind: There are two different types of the vaccine. You may need both of them.

Be sure to ask your doctor what’s best for you. Having asthma makes asking about the pneumonia vaccine extra important.

Sources: Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (www.aafa.org); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)

It’s not too late!

A yearly flu shot is the best way to protect yourself from the flu. The vaccine is safe and won’t cause the flu. If you haven’t had the flu shot yet, it’s not too late to get it. Ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)

Three questions to ask your doctor about opioids

Opioids can be dangerous when overused or abused. Before you take an opioid, ask your doctor:
1. Why do I need it?
2. What are the risks?
3. Are there safer options?

Ask about Narcan too. It’s a medicine that could save your life if you overdose.

Need help getting clean? To find treatment near you, call 1-800-662-4357.

Sources: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (www.samhsa.gov); U.S. Food and Drug Administration (www.fda.gov)

Did you know that you may be able to get Lifeline cell service plus a smartphone at no cost to you? Go to www.MercyCareAZ.org or call Member Services at 1-800-624-3879 (TTY: 711) and ask about the Assurance Wireless Lifeline program.

Caregivers: Seek the help you deserve

If you are a caregiver, ask your loved one’s care manager about their needed services as well as services you might need as a caregiver. For example, you may feel overwhelmed, sad or burned out. The care manager can provide information and referrals for support.