Three key things to know about asthma

If you have asthma, here are three things to know:

1. **Asthma doesn’t go away.** You won’t always have symptoms, but the airways in your lungs are always inflamed. They become tight and narrow if you breathe in a trigger like pollen or smoke. You might cough, wheeze, become short of breath or feel your chest get tight.

2. **Asthma needs an action plan.** Ask your provider how to control your asthma. An asthma action plan will tell you how to avoid your asthma triggers and include a list of medicines you need to take and how. Review your plan each time you see your provider. Ask questions about any part you don’t understand. Following your action plan can help prevent you from going to the hospital due to your asthma.

3. **Asthma can be severe.** It can even be life-threatening. Never underestimate the seriousness of this disease — people do die from asthma. That’s why it’s important to get emergency medical help for a severe asthma attack. Your action plan will spell out when to do that.

Sources: American Lung Association (www.lung.org); National Institutes of Health (www.nih.gov)

If your doctor prescribed medication for asthma, it is important to take the medication on a regular basis. This will help prevent asthma flare-ups. Taking asthma medication on a regular basis can also help you have a more active lifestyle and help you do things without being easily short of breath.
5 ways to weather spring allergies

Spring brings welcome sunshine and warmer weather. For people with seasonal allergies, however, it can bring months of misery. The good news is that you don’t have to suffer if you know what to do:

1. **Start meds sooner.** Allergy symptoms can start well before April or May. Trees begin releasing their pollen if there are warmer days in winter. Start taking your allergy meds as soon as the weather report calls for a warm streak.

2. **Spring clean.** Sweep away any dust or cobwebs that gathered over winter. Vacuum dog and cat hair from where pets sit and sleep.

3. **De-mold.** Mold grows where there’s moisture. Check bathrooms and basements.

4. **Keep windows shut.** You may want to welcome spring with open windows, but pollen can drift indoors along with the fresh air.

5. **Watch the clock.** Depending on the season and what type of pollen you’re allergic to, pollen levels may be better or worse at certain times of the day.

Sources: American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (www.acaai.org); American Lung Association (www.lung.org)

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**Ask about Narcan**

Opioid overdoses kill people. They can be reversed by a drug called naloxone (Narcan). Anyone can give this drug and save a life. From 1996 through June 2014, it saved the lives of more than 26,000 people in the U.S. You will still need to call 911 after you give it, because it will wear off in one to two hours. To learn more, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

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

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**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](http://www.MercyCareAZ.org) or call Member Services at **1-800-624-3879** and ask about the Assurance Wireless Lifeline program.

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**Need help?** A care manager can tell you more about asthma and help you connect with your provider. Call Member Services and ask for the Care Management Department.

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**Share your concerns**

If any part of your care makes you uncomfortable, tell your provider. You can also tell your care manager, Member Services, or the Grievance and Appeals Department — even if it seems small. Your comfort and security are an important part of your care. It’s your health care team’s job to make sure you feel safe.