

YOUR PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

This may seem simplistic, but around the country researchers are frantically looking for a way to reduce hospitalizations and deaths due to asthma, and this is their tool of choice.

FIND

your best peak flow reading (write the number here _____).

GREEN ZONE

When your peak flow is at least 80% of your best (write the number here _____) you are in the GREEN ZONE. Simply continue your current asthma plan.

YELLOW ZONE

If your peak flow *is between* 80% of your best (write the number here _____) and half of your personal best (write the number here _____)you are in the YELLOW ZONE. You need to pep up your medications. If you were slack about taking your usual regimen, start it immediately after taking two puffs of your quick relief medication. Recheck your peak flow in a half an hour. If you are still in the yellow zone then you need to take:

RED ZONE

If your peak flow is less than half your best (write the number here _____) then you are in the RED ZONE. You may notice no relief from your medications, you may be unable to talk well, and your breathing and pulse may be fast. Take two puffs of your quick relief medication. Take the medications for the yellow zone plus those below and CALL OR GO TO YOUR DOCTOR. If it takes more than twenty minutes to go to your doctor or talk to your doctor: GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM or CALL 911 immediately. Medications to try in this event:

Those above plus:

CARING FAMILY, S.C. easier to access links via www.caringfamilysc.com

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Longer acting (8-12 hour) relief can be obtained from Serevent. It will take longer to kick in however. It is a preventative medication. It is best to take Serevent after a puff of one of the quick relief medications, as that helps it penetrate the lungs better. If you get up in the middle of the night for a puff on your nebulizer, consider a preventive puff each night at bedtime. **Remember that you cannot use this when you have an attack.** It doesn't kick in for an hour or so.

Other preventative medicines include inhaled Intal, inhaled steroids, oral steroids and leukotriene antagonists. All of these can be used when you know you might run into a problem breathing at the soccer game or with the cats at Aunt Suzies. Using your peak flow meter can help you decide when you should use or increase the use of these medications.

Intal is a medication that slows down part of the lung's inflammatory cascade. It is especially helpful for preventing the mucus buildup in asthma. It is helpful for some with exercise-induced asthma. It will not help you once you are wheezing.

Inhaled steroids include AeroBid, Azmacort, Beclovent, Flovent and Vanceril. They are currently promoted as the most cost-effective asthma treatments. They interfere with the lung's inflammatory cascade and sometimes make a little thrush (white coating) in the mouth. Proper use of the inhaler or use of a spacer device (ask us!) can help

prevent this. It is simple to add an extra puff of these preventer medications when your peak-flow is less than your best. It may take two weeks to see the effect of these medications, so don't give up on them right away.

Advair is a neat combination of inhaled steroid and Serevent. This combination works far better than either of the two medications separately. It has been so successful that we rarely need to resort to oral steroids anymore.

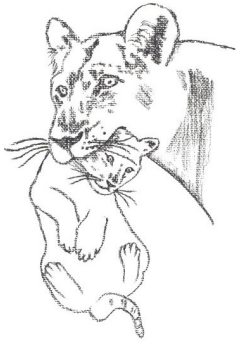
Leukotriene receptor antagonists include Singulair and Accolate. They were designed just for the lung so that the inflammatory cascade could be interrupted without any risk of side effects in the rest of the body. They are miracle drugs and the price reflects it. The benefit, however, is freedom from any need for rescue inhalers, previously stashed in cars, coats and purses. These are pills taken once or twice a day and are nicely flavored in the kid sizes. Doses may be increased or decreased depending on the season.

Remember that your understanding of asthma will change with time. Your asthma may change with time as well. Use **Caring Family's** doctors on a regular basis to discuss and improve the control of your asthma. You may also learn from other resources. Some health plans will pay for asthma education (contact them). And if you have access to the internet, check out the resources below:

<http://www.aanma.org/> awesome networking for asthmatics
http://my.webmd.com/content/dmk/dmk_article_40007 great and thorough
<http://www.lungusa.org/asthma/ascont.html> American lung association
<http://www.intelihealth.com/IH/ihtIH/WSIHW000/3457/3457.html?k=zonex408x3457>
<http://www.aafa.org> asthma & allergy foundation of America
http://health.nih.gov/result.asp?disease_id=56 national asthma education program
<http://www.aaaai.org> american academy of allergy, asthma and immunology
Asthma magazine call 1 800 527-3284 to subscribe

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Asthma

With asthma, lungs simply react too strongly to molds, cat dander, dust, and sometimes even vigorous exercise. A sensation of gasping for breath or wheezing occurs. We don't have a good explanation why some people react more than others. But we do know that everyone is on a continuum...even 10% of Olympic athletes were found to have some asthma.

With modern medicines there is no reason to suffer with asthma. Everyone should breathe perfectly every day. There is no fear of becoming 'resistant' to medicines by using them every day, as long as they are used properly. Asthma is becoming more of a problem worldwide, probably because of more pollution.

Do you have asthma? Does one of your friends or children have asthma? The symptoms are varied, although most people have wheezing. But some just have an excess of mucus, clear their throat a lot, hear crackling in their lungs, feel tightness in their chest or simply feel uneasy. Children may just get quiet. Doctors can test your lungs by blowing a measured amount of dust at you until you can't breathe too well, but we at **Caring Family** don't like that test. Besides being dangerous, you are perfectly capable of gathering information that will diagnose asthma (or prove it isn't).

Please ask for a peak flow meter if you don't have a good one. A peak flow meter is a very helpful aid. It tells us how quickly the air can leave your lungs. Even with asthma, the air can get out of your lungs normally most of the time. But during an 'attack,' the air is abnormally slow to leave. You can make a chart of how well you are breathing every day by keeping track of your peak flows several times each day.

Sometimes your breathing improves when you have a weekend away from your usual environment. That tells us that something in your home, work or school is making your asthma worse. If that's the case, we need to put on our Sherlock Holmes hat and seek out the things (allergens) that are making you breathe worse. Things that may be causing a problem include: pets, things that collect dust, carpets, thick drapes, old mattresses, outdoor pollens or grasses, mold in house plants, metabisulfites in beer or wine, mildew, certain perfumes, cleaning products, feather pillows, solvents, tobacco smoke, aspirin, some foods, sneezing. Avoiding allergens is much more pleasant than trying to have an

allergist make you immune through allergy shots or other immunotherapy.

Allergens are additive! You may be fine with Fido and your hamster until fall's burning leaves irritate you beyond your wheezing threshold. By using a peak flow meter you can detect when your breathing is getting bad before it gets terrible. When you are properly treating your asthma, exposure to one allergen for a limited time should not send you to the emergency room. Many people have only rare asthma attacks. Treating an attack away from home can be difficult if your medication is not with you. Just remember, you do not need a prescription for a Primatene inhaler!

Exercise can worsen asthma symptoms. Usually this means you are already not breathing your best even before you start your exercise. Our goal for you is to develop a treatment plan that lets you exercise to your heart's (lung's) content! There are patients who never exercised or participated in sports simply because they never knew how to control their asthma, (or even didn't know they had it).

Many people only have asthma when they get sick. Since mucus can get stuck in such lungs more easily, bacteria can more easily find a safe place to multiply and cause pneumonia in such individuals. Having medication that treats the asthma will not only help you feel better, but help prevent lung complications. EVERY asthmatic is HIGHLY ENCOURAGED to get a flu shot every year.

Treating asthma is easier now than in the past. Several excellent medications have been genetically engineered to act strictly on the lung. There is no reason to be crippled by your asthma. If you are not getting adequate control despite several visits with your **Caring Family** physician, we will be happy to refer you to either an allergist or a pulmonary specialist. Quick relief from your asthma can be obtained by medications like: Albuterol, Ventolin, Proventil, Primatene, Maxair, Brethaire, Combivent, Tonalate and Xoponex. These are called beta-adrenergic nebulizers or metered dose inhalers except for the last one, which is only for use in a nebulizer machine. The medical staff of **Caring Family** can demonstrate the proper use of these. If you don't know, please ask. You can practice the proper technique in front of a mirror. By holding the mouthpiece an inch away from your mouth, breathing out, activating the nebulizer and taking a good strong breath inward, you will get the maximum benefit from your medication.