



# Facts on asthma and allergies

## What you should know

Proper treatment and care are extremely helpful in maintaining a healthy lifestyle for people living with asthma and allergies. Nearly 25 million people, or 8 percent of the U.S. population, are affected by asthma.<sup>1</sup> And more than 50 million people suffer from various types of allergies.<sup>2</sup> Asthma has cost the U.S. approximately \$3,300 per person in medical expenses, school absences, and missed work days according to a study conducted from 2002 to 2007.<sup>1</sup>

The most common asthma symptoms include:

- trouble breathing;
- a tight feeling in the chest;
- coughing, especially at night or while exercising;
- wheezing – a squeaky or whistling sound when you breathe.<sup>3</sup>

The severity of asthma varies from person to person.<sup>3</sup> Some people may experience mild asthma symptoms that respond well to a rescue inhaler; others with more persistent asthma may need daily maintenance treatments to control their symptoms.<sup>3</sup>

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## What to know about allergies

More than 50 million people suffer from various types of allergies. But what triggers those allergic reactions? Your immune system protects you from bacteria and viruses; sometimes it mounts an inappropriate response to a harmless substance. When that happens, your body creates chemicals, like histamine, that trigger an allergic reaction.<sup>4</sup> The most common types of allergies include:

- food;
  - seasonal;
  - and other including medicines, hay, etc.<sup>5</sup>
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It is important for those diagnosed with asthma to always carry a rescue inhaler in case of an attack regardless of the severity of their asthma.<sup>3</sup>

## Other treatment options

There are many treatment options available to help you manage asthma. Other types include:

- quick relief medicine — relaxing the muscles around the airways of the lungs;
- long term control medicines — anti-inflammatories that work by reducing inflammation in the airways of the lungs.<sup>6</sup>

You should contact your primary care provider to see what other treatments might be useful for you.

## Inhalers work only when there is medicine in them

Shaking an inhaler is not a way to determine if there is medicine left inside. Some people are often under the false impression that if they can “hear something” when they shake the inhaler, it still contains medicine. Furthermore, simply because an inhaler is still spraying does not automatically mean that the inhaler contains medicine. An inhaler will often spray a propellant that is used to help get the medicine to your lungs, even when the inhaler is out of medicine.<sup>7</sup>

As many as 40 percent of patients believe they are taking their asthma medication when they are actually using an empty or nearly empty inhaler. If you want to know how much medicine remains in your rescue inhaler, you should rely on a dose counter.<sup>7</sup> Ask your doctor to prescribe a rescue inhaler that helps you know your count.<sup>7</sup>

## We're here to help you

Independence Administrators is here to help you make good decisions when it comes to your health. Our people, tools, and educational resources can support you in making informed decisions.

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## What to remember

There are many different types of asthma and allergies, and they affect everyone differently. Remember to be aware of your specific symptoms and identify what you can do to help yourself maintain a healthy lifestyle.

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<sup>1</sup> Asthma Statistics; American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology. Available at <http://www.aaaai.org/about-aaaai/newsroom/asthma-statistics>

<sup>2</sup> Allergy Facts; College of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology; Available at <http://acaai.org/news/facts-statistics/allergies>

<sup>3</sup> Understanding Asthma; Know Your Count. Available at <http://www.knowyourcount.com/Asthma.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Allergic Reaction Causes. Available at <http://www.webmd.com/allergies/guide/allergic-reaction-causes>

<sup>5</sup> Allergies Health Center. Available at <http://www.webmd.com/allergies/guide/allergy-symptoms-types>

<sup>6</sup> Asthma Treatment Options. Available at <http://www.asthma.com/what-is-asthma/asthma-treatment.html>

<sup>7</sup> Dose Count Matters; Know Your Count. Available at <http://www.knowyourcount.com/DoseCounters.aspx>

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