



# LIVING WELL



with

# Asthma

# Asthma Self Care Pack



Name

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(please state the name you  
prefer to be known as)

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Date of Birth

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NHS Number

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Emergency Contact/  
Carer's Details

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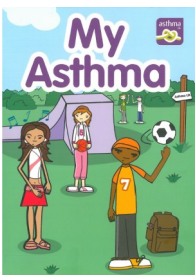
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We have tried to include as much information as possible in the pack.

As everyone's situation is different, you may find that there is information in this pack that doesn't apply to you.



The pack is intended for adults who have asthma.

Asthma UK produce a very useful publication called 'My Asthma' that children with asthma can use.

You may also use this pack to make notes, store appointments, and add letters, leaflets and anything else you may find useful.

# What is Self Care?

...and what does it mean for me?



Looking after yourself in a healthy way, whether it's brushing your teeth, taking medicine when you have a cold, or doing some exercise, is really important to help to keep yourself as well as possible.

If you have a long-term condition, there are extra things you may need to consider, such as making changes to your diet, different types of exercise or different types of medication you may need to take.

By staying active, by doing things that are important to you, such as gardening, seeing friends and family, going on holiday, or continuing to work, if possible. It involves looking at what you can do and want to do, rather than what you can't do.

Living a healthy lifestyle is an important part of self care for everyone. You can take responsibility for your own health and wellbeing, with support from the people involved in your care.

When you talk to your doctor or nurse about your condition, you may want to discuss some of the things you need to do to stay well. Some of these will be things that you do yourself, such as eating healthily, exercising, or taking your medicines at the right time.

## NHS Choices

There's lots of useful information about keeping well and healthy living. Look out for the Live Well section of the NHS Choices website. If you're living with a long-term condition, Your health, your way has advice on self care and taking control of your health.



[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

# What is Asthma?

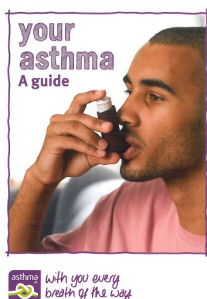
Asthma is caused by inflammation of the airways. These are the small tubes, called bronchi, which carry air in and out of the lungs. If you have asthma, the bronchi will be inflamed and more sensitive than normal.

When you come into contact with something that irritates your lungs, known as a trigger, your airways become narrow, the muscles around them tighten and there is an increase in the production of sticky mucus (phlegm).



This leads to symptoms including:

- Difficulty breathing
- Wheezing and coughing
- A tight chest



For detailed information about asthma, its causes and how you can keep it under control, visit Asthma UK's website;

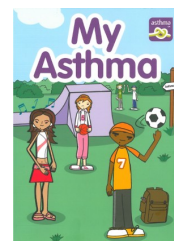


**[www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)**



**Asthma UK Helpline 0800 121 6244**

Asthma UK produce a very useful publication called 'My Asthma' that children with asthma can use.



There are also information guides available on the British Lung Foundation website:



**[www.blf.org.uk](http://www.blf.org.uk)**

# What causes Asthma?

The cause of asthma is not fully understood, although it is known to run in families.

You are more likely to have asthma if one or both of your parents has the condition.

Things known to increase the likelihood of developing asthma include:

- A family history of asthma or other related allergic conditions (known as atopic conditions), such as eczema, food allergy or hay fever
- Developing another atopic condition, such as a food allergy
- Having bronchiolitis as a child (a common lung infection among children)
- Being exposed to tobacco smoke as a child, particularly if your mother smoked during pregnancy
- Being born prematurely (especially if you needed a ventilator)
- A low birth weight (less than 2kg or 4.5lb)



For detailed information about asthma, its causes and how you can keep it under control, visit Asthma UK's website;



**[www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)**



**Asthma UK Helpline    0800 121 6244**

There are also information guides available on the British Lung Foundation website:



**[www.blf.org.uk](http://www.blf.org.uk)**

# Living with Asthma

Your asthma may get better or worse at different times. There may be periods when you have asthma symptoms, but in between you may be generally well, even for many years. Here are some things you can do to help keep your asthma under control.

## Self Care

Self care is an integral part of daily life. It involves taking responsibility for your own health and wellbeing with support from those involved in your care. Self care includes what you do every day to stay fit and maintain good physical and mental health, prevent illness or accidents and care more effectively for minor ailments and long-term conditions. People living with long-term conditions can benefit enormously from being supported to self care. You can live longer, experience less pain, anxiety, depression and fatigue, have a better quality of life and be more active and independent.

## Look after your asthma

Work in partnership with your doctor or asthma nurse is important, so that you have a good understanding of your condition, and how to look after it. Make sure you know what your medicines are, what they are for, and how to use your inhalers correctly. Having an asthma action plan is one of the most important things you can do to manage your asthma. Visit your doctor or nurse at least once a year, even if you are well, to review your medicines.

## Have a written personal action plan



The plan will contain information about how to manage your symptoms, your asthma medicines, how to tell when your symptoms are getting worse and what you should do about it. Your doctor or nurse should help you to complete it.

You can download a copy of Asthma UK's '*Your asthma*' action plan here:



[www.asthma.org.uk/advice-just-diagnosed-manage-your-asthma-better](http://www.asthma.org.uk/advice-just-diagnosed-manage-your-asthma-better)



## Take your medication

It is important to take your medication as prescribed, even if you start to feel better. Taking your preventer medication every day will help keep your asthma under control and can help prevent asthma attacks. Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist to check your inhaler technique, to make sure you're taking your medicines properly. If you have any questions or concerns about medication you're taking or side effects, talk to your doctor or nurse.

## Regular reviews



Because asthma is a long-term condition, you'll be in contact with your doctor or asthma nurse regularly. You should see them at least once a year, or more regularly if you have just been diagnosed or if you've been unwell with your asthma. A good relationship with your doctor/nurse means you can easily discuss your symptoms, or concerns.

You can find out more information about what you can expect from your asthma review here:



[www.asthma.org.uk/advice-manage-your-asthma-better-making-the-most-of-your-asthma-review](http://www.asthma.org.uk/advice-manage-your-asthma-better-making-the-most-of-your-asthma-review)

## Check your peak flow



By keeping a peak flow diary you can keep track of your symptoms and notice if your asthma is changing.

You can get a free peak flow diary from Asthma UK:



[www.asthma.org.uk/advice-manage-your-asthma-better-peak-flow-diary](http://www.asthma.org.uk/advice-manage-your-asthma-better-peak-flow-diary)



## Get your jabs

If you take inhaled or oral steroids to manage your asthma, you need flu and pneumonia vaccinations to reduce your chances of a serious respiratory illness. The flu and pneumonia jabs are available free from your doctor.

The flu jab is given every year from October. The pneumonia jab is a one-off jab that protects against certain types of pneumonia, septicaemia (blood poisoning) and meningitis. You can have both jabs at the same time.

The shingles vaccine is currently given to those aged 70 and 79 years old.

## Check your painkillers

If you have asthma and you take aspirin or other painkillers, there's a very small chance that you'll have a bad reaction to the medication.

If this happens, stop taking the aspirin and seek advice from your doctor.

## Take care in cold weather

Cold air is a major trigger of asthma symptoms, such as wheezing and shortness of breath. Be especially careful in winter. Stay indoors on very cold, windy days. If you go out, wear a scarf over your nose and mouth. Be extra careful about taking your regular medications. Keep rescue inhalers close by and in a warm place.



## Eat healthily and exercise

Eating a healthy diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and few additives may help with asthma in the long term. A diet that includes a high level of nutrients can also boost the immune system and help ward off colds and flu - both of which are common asthma triggers.

It also helps if you stay trim. Losing weight can help in managing asthma, and combined with a more active lifestyle, can also help to improve lung function.

For more information on exercising when you have asthma read the 'Keeping Active' section of this pack.

## Try to avoid cigarette smoke

Quitting smoking is one of the best things that you can do for your asthma.

This will significantly reduce the severity and frequency of your symptoms. Smoking can also reduce the effectiveness of asthma medication. If you do not smoke and you have asthma, try to avoid being exposed to tobacco smoke.

Research has shown you are up to four times more likely to quit smoking if you use the support of the NHS in addition to stop-smoking medicines, such as patches or gum. You can find support and order a 'quit kit' to help you stop smoking at:



[www.nhs.uk/smokefree](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree)

## Hayfever/ allergies and asthma

If you have hayfever make sure you have your medicines reviewed about a month before it starts. For more information on asthma triggers and how to manage them please visit:



[www.asthma.org.uk/knowledge-triggers-a-z](http://www.asthma.org.uk/knowledge-triggers-a-z)



**Asthma UK's Helpline      0800 121 6244**

## Know what steps to take in an asthma attack

You can find out your risk of having an attack by taking Asthma UK's 'Triple A' test at:



[www.asthma.org.uk/advice-the-triple-a-test](http://www.asthma.org.uk/advice-the-triple-a-test)



Asthma attacks don't usually come out of the blue, but are the result of gradually worsening symptoms. If your asthma symptoms are getting worse, don't ignore them. Sometimes, no matter how careful you are in taking your medicines and avoiding triggers, you may have an attack. You can order a free, pocket-sized 'What to do in an asthma attack' card to carry with you.

## Is it an asthma attack?

You can tell you're having an asthma attack if:

- Your reliever inhaler isn't helping
- You have to keep using your reliever inhaler as the effect wears off quickly
- Your symptoms are getting worse
- You're too breathless to speak, eat or sleep

Often, using your reliever inhaler will be enough to relieve your symptoms when you start having an attack.

Sometimes, symptoms are more severe and urgent action is needed.

## What to do

Current guidelines for children and adults having an asthma attack are to:

- Take your reliever inhaler (usually blue) straight away and try to breathe deeply and steadily
- Sit down and loosen any tight clothing
- **If your symptoms haven't improved after five minutes, or you're worried, call 999 or see a doctor urgently**
- Continue to take a puff of your reliever inhaler every minute until help arrives

# Keeping Active

## Get regular exercise

Although exercise can be a trigger for some people, it's really important to do as much as you can. Exercise can help your asthma, by improving your lung function and stamina. If exercise triggers your asthma it might help if you take your reliever inhaler 20 minutes beforehand.



Walking, swimming (chlorine can be a trigger for some people) and cycling are all activities you can do if you have asthma. A lot of top sportsmen and women have asthma. Some people find that interval based exercise rather than continuous is more manageable, eg running/ walking, playing team sports where you can rest. There are some famous sportsmen and women who have asthma, including Bradley Wiggins CBE and 1 in 4 members of the GB Olympic team - so don't let asthma hold you back!

- Champions Show The Way offer walks throughout the Bradford area.



**Champions Show The Way    01274 321911**



**[www.walkingforhealth.org.uk](http://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk)**

- If you find that exercise gives you troublesome asthma symptoms, discuss this with your doctor, as it means that your asthma is not as well controlled as it could be. You may need more preventive asthma treatments.

For more information visit the Asthma UK website:



**[www.asthma.org.uk/knowledge-bank-living-with-asthma-exercise](http://www.asthma.org.uk/knowledge-bank-living-with-asthma-exercise)**

# Travel

Being diagnosed with asthma should not prevent you from travelling or going on holiday, as long as you feel well enough and your condition is well controlled. Planning ahead is key to having a great time away and dealing with any potential problems with your asthma. Health experts advise preparing for a trip four to six weeks before you travel.



If your asthma is severe you may want to check with your doctor beforehand. It may help to jot down a few notes and go through any of the following at your next appointment.

Things you may need to consider:

- Do you need a doctor's letter to say you are fit to travel?
- Do you need to take extra medication with you? Bring enough medicine to last throughout your trip plus a few extra days
- It may be advisable to take two sets of medication with you when you travel. Carry them in different places in case you lose one. Spare inhalers can usually be carried in your hand luggage
- Take a print-out of your regular prescriptions, including the generic names of medicines and what they are for, in case you need medical assistance during your trip or your medication is lost
- Having asthma should not stop you from getting **travel insurance**, but you may need to declare it as an existing condition for your insurance to be valid
- Be aware of your **asthma triggers** and how these may be affected by a different environment
- Do you need any **immunisations**?
- Do you know who to contact in case of an emergency? Find out how you can get medical help (such as a local ambulance or doctor) if necessary at your destination.

There is lots of information about travel here:



[www.asthma.org.uk/knowledge-bank-living-with-asthma-travel](http://www.asthma.org.uk/knowledge-bank-living-with-asthma-travel)

## Health checks

Things you might want to consider:

- See your doctor or asthma nurse before you travel to review your personal asthma action plan and to make sure it's up to date.
- If you don't have a personal action plan, now is the time to get one. It will allow you to recognise deteriorating asthma and alter your treatment to stay well.

## Asthma triggers

- If being exposed to feather pillows makes your asthma worse, you could bring your own non-feather alternative, or ask your hotel for a pillow with synthetic filling
- If you're sensitive to tobacco smoke, ask your accommodation provider whether you should book a non-smoking room, as smoking rules vary from country to country (for example, smoking is permitted in some restaurants abroad)
- Some holiday activities, such as scuba diving, may be hazardous to people with asthma, and special considerations may apply. Always check as it is better to be safe than sorry
- Ensure your asthma is fully controlled as exposure to allergens and viral infections in confined spaces, such as planes and ships, may make your condition worse



## Air travel



- If you're always short of breath, even when resting, you may need a special evaluation before you fly because of the reduced oxygen levels at high altitude
- Carry all your asthma medicines as hand luggage, in case your checked-in luggage goes missing or your medicines are damaged in the baggage hold
- Under current security restrictions, you cannot carry containers with liquids, gels or creams that exceed 100ml in your hand luggage
- You can carry essential medicines of more than 100ml on board, but you'll need prior approval from the airline and airport and a letter from your doctor or a prescription
- All asthma medicines taken on board should be in their original packaging, with the prescription label and contact details of the pharmacy clearly visible

## Travel immunisations

- Your doctor or practice nurse can tell you what vaccinations and precautions you need to take for the country you're travelling to
- You can have the usual travel jabs that are recommended for your destination, unless there are other health reasons for not having them
- Tell your doctor or practice nurse if you have recently used high-dose oral steroids before you have any vaccinations
- Asthma and its treatment don't usually interfere with malaria tablets
- Make sure you check with your doctor or healthcare team about anything you are unsure of



## Travel insurance

- Take out travel insurance and check that it will cover your asthma. Many insurers ask you to get permission from your doctor before you travel
- Shop around for the best deal. Travel insurance quotes vary depending on your age, medication and destination
- For travel in Europe, make sure you have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). This entitles you to reduced-cost and sometimes free medical treatment



For more information on the EHIC, and to apply online, visit:



**[www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/Pages/about-the-ehic](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/Pages/about-the-ehic)**

- Take out travel insurance as well because an EHIC may not cover all the costs of your treatment. An EHIC doesn't cover the cost of being flown back to the UK
- See your doctor or asthma nurse before you travel to review your personal asthma action plan and to make sure it's up to date
- Asthma UK list some specialist travel insurance companies who cover medical conditions



**[www.asthma.org.uk/knowledge-bank-living-with-asthma-travel-insurance-for-people-with-asthma](http://www.asthma.org.uk/knowledge-bank-living-with-asthma-travel-insurance-for-people-with-asthma)**



**Asthma UK**

**0800 121 6244**

# Appointments

It is important to pay attention to any changes in your health, and to stay up to date with your health checks.

Filling in this page and sharing it with people who support you can help.



	Date of last check up	Appointments	Notes
General Health Check			
Flu Jab			
Asthma Nurse			
Other Checks			

It is important to let your health or social care provider know you have asthma so that they can offer any extra support you may need.

# Planning For The Future

## Work

If you are not well enough to do the work you usually do it is important to talk to your employer as soon as possible, so that you can find a solution that suits both of you. For example, it may be possible for you to work part-time

- The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires employers to make reasonable adjustments to working practices or premises to help a person with a disability. This might include changing or modifying tasks, altering work patterns, installing special equipment, allowing time off to attend appointments or helping with travel to work



**Disability Advice Bradford**

**01274 609895**



**[www.bradforddisabilityservices.co.uk](http://www.bradforddisabilityservices.co.uk)**



**Citizens Advice Bureau**

**0844 245 1282**



**[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)**



**Department of Work & Pensions 0845 60 60 265**

- If you are not well enough to work, check whether there are benefits that you or your family may be entitled to before you finish. If necessary, your personnel department or manager should be able to help you make enquiries
- The Asthma UK website has useful information covering all aspects of working and asthma, jobs, managing the condition and occupational asthma:



**[www.asthma.org.uk/knowledge-bank-living-with-asthma-asthma-at-work](http://www.asthma.org.uk/knowledge-bank-living-with-asthma-asthma-at-work)**

## Benefit Checks

Many people don't claim the benefits they are entitled to.

Asthma is classed as a disability if it has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal daily activities. This impairment must:



- o have lasted for 12 months
- o be likely to last 12 months
- o be of a recurring nature where a recurrence is likely in a 12-month period

If you or your child has care or mobility needs because of asthma, you may be entitled to benefits.

You are entitled to a benefits check to ensure you are receiving the right amount. The organisations listed below can help you with this:



**Disability Advice Bradford**

**01274 609895**



**Bradford & Airedale  
Citizens Advice Bureau**

**0844 245 1282**



**Department of Work & Pensions**

**0845 60 60 265**



**Asthma UK**

**0800 121 6244**



**British Lung Foundation**

**03000 030 555**

# Where To Find Support


## Services

Look at what services may be available to you. Even if you don't need them now, they may be useful in the future.

- Find out what services can be arranged through your GP or consultant.
- Find out what kinds of services and support are provided by organisations, such as Asthma UK. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau, or Social Services can advise about this.
- Connect to Support Bradford is website to help people seeking social care or support in the Bradford District, with everything you need to help you with your support, from local to national products and services, information, advice and more.



[www.connecttosupport.org/bradford](http://www.connecttosupport.org/bradford)




### Welcome to Connect to Support Bradford District

Connect to Support is a new website for people needing care or support in Bradford District. You can find everything you need to help you with your support here, from local to national products and services, plus information and advice and much more.


**Providers, sign up now**  
Register today

**View**  
the Introductory Video


**Tell us what you think**  
about the site



**Search and Shop**



**Local groups and activities**  
Find local groups or activities in your area



**Information and advice**

- Contact your local social services department for details of services that they can arrange. Find out about getting a community care assessment to assess your needs. Social Services departments are listed in the phone book under the name of the local authority.

# Useful Contacts

Name	Contact Number	Details
<b>Emergency Services</b>	<b>999</b>	To call in case of fire, medical emergency or if you urgently need the Police.
<b>111</b>	<b>111</b>	NHS 111 is a fast and easy way to get the right help, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.
<b>Asthma UK</b>	<b>0800 121 6244</b> <a href="http://www.asthma.org.uk">www.asthma.org.uk</a>	The UK's leading asthma charity have some fantastic resources and a very comprehensive website covering all aspects of living well with asthma.
<b>British Lung Foundation</b>	<b>03000 030 555</b> <a href="http://www.blf.org.uk">www.blf.org.uk</a> <a href="mailto:helpline@blf.org.uk">helpline@blf.org.uk</a>	Advice and support for people affected by lung conditions, plus a comprehensive range of publications on their website
<b>Bradford Stop Smoking Service</b>		
<b>Health Trainers</b>	<b>01274 777527</b>	Health Trainers can support you to make lifestyle changes and improve your health.
<b>Carers' Resource</b>	<b>01274 449660</b> <b>01756 700888</b> <a href="http://www.carersresource.org">www.carersresource.org</a>	The Carers' Resource provides support for carers, no matter what their age, race, religion or needs.

# Useful Contacts

Name	Contact Number	Details
<b>Champions Show The Way</b>	<b>01274 321911</b>  champions@bdct.nhs.uk	CSTW supports people's Health and Wellbeing by providing social activities and walking groups which are run by Volunteer Community Health Champions. These free activities are aimed at anyone who has a long term health condition/has recently been discharged from hospital or is over 50.
<b>Carers' Connection</b>	<b>01274 323323</b>	Carers' Connection offer an advice and support service to carers on any matter of interest to them, such as: Health and social care, Residential care, Holidays, Equipment, Leisure and wellbeing.
<b>Connect to Support Bradford District</b>	<a href="http://www.connecttosupport.org/bradford">www.connecttosupport.org/bradford</a>	A website to help people seeking social care or support in the Bradford District. Everything you need to help you with your support, from local to national products and services, information, advice and more.





Airedale, Wharfedale and Craven  
Bradford Districts  
Bradford City

*CCGs working together*



**City of Bradford MDC**

[www.bradford.gov.uk](http://www.bradford.gov.uk)

Produced by:



Health Action Local Engagement  
*Healthy Living Project*



Based on the RNIB Living Well with Diabetes Folder developed by Elaine Appelbee in collaboration with local communities and health service providers.

Special thanks to Asthma UK for their contribution to the Asthma Self Care Pack.

The wording in this publication can be made available in large print or Braille. Please call 01274 437963.

Self Care is committed to working in collaboration across Bradford CBMDC, Bradford City CCG, Bradford Districts CCG and Airedale, Wharfedale and Craven