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Quick Reference Guide to Understanding Your Asthma Care

Asthma is a chronic condition that narrows your airways and can make it hard to breathe. There is no cure but it can be controlled.

That's where we come in.

This handy-dandy fact sheet will help you work with your health-care provider to get and keep your asthma under control. You'll know it's controlled when you don't have regular symptoms, like wheezing or coughing. We'll also share what high-quality asthma care looks like for Canadians aged 16+ so you know what you should expect based on the Ontario Health Asthma Quality Standards.

Let's get started:

First, if you think you have asthma, get tested

If you have symptoms like shortness of breath, tightness in your chest, wheezing or coughing, go see your healthcare provider. You need to know if you have asthma or if there is something else going on. It could save your life. Ask if you should have a specific breathing test called spirometry – it's the preferred test to check for asthma.

Get your asthma checked every year

Annual check-ups will tell you if your asthma is changing and if you're in control. If you have regular symptoms, a severe flare-up or a medication change, you will need to go more often.

You'll be asked about your symptoms, what makes your asthma worse, your medication, and anything else that affects how you feel. Keep track of these details between appointments so you don't have to rely on memory.





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Medication depends on how controlled your asthma is

There are many types of asthma medication. For example, some puffers can control symptoms if used regularly and triggers are avoided. Talk to your healthcare provider about your goals, beliefs and concerns. Together, find what works best for you. Once you do, your healthcare provider will teach you when and how to use the medication. Take it as prescribed to stay in control. If flare-ups keep coming, you will need to work with your healthcare provider on different doses or different medication.

Learn how to manage asthma and use an Asthma Action Plan

Your healthcare provider will teach you how to control your asthma but ultimately it's on you. To set you up for success, work together on an Asthma Action Plan that lists your medication, how to take it, things you can do to stay healthy and what to do if your symptoms flare up. You can also ask about being referred to an asthma education program.

You may need specialized care

If despite taking your medication and avoiding triggers you still have symptoms, or if your healthcare provider has other concerns, you may be referred to a specialist to get your asthma under control.

If you went to the hospital for asthma, you need follow-up care

A healthcare provider should follow up with you within two-to-seven days if you went to the ER or were hospitalized because of asthma. They'll check to see how you're doing, review your medication and check your Asthma Action Plan for any needed changes. Follow-up may come from your healthcare provider, an asthma specialist or another healthcare professional qualified to help. Ask questions so you know what caused the flare-up, details of your care and how to prevent it in future.

Great, tell me more

Visit lunghealth.ca for more asthma information and resources, including a free Asthma Action Plan download.

If you prefer to talk to a human, call our certified respiratory educators at **1-888-344-5864**. It's free. They're also available via email at info@lunghealth.ca or for an online chat at lunghealth.ca.

Reference: Ontario Health quality standards
Asthma Care in the Community for People 16 Years of Age and Older (2020)

The Lung Health Foundation is the leading national charity dedicated to improving the lung health of Canadians.

We are ending gaps in the prevention, diagnosis and care of lung disease. We also advocate for patients, fund life-saving research and provide trustworthy information to help Canadians breathe better, regardless of income or location.