

## WHAT YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW

You've got asthma, you already know that. But what do you **really** need to know so that you can control your asthma instead of your asthma controlling you?

Here are some tips from other teens with asthma to help you live with yours:

### **Take your medicine regularly.**

Some asthma medicines help keep you from having attacks. But they only work if you take them regularly. That may mean taking the medicine every day, even when you feel just fine.

Don't stop taking the medicine if you have an asthma attack, either. It can take some time before the medicine starts to work in your body. Your health care provider will tell you how often you should take your medicine.

### **Take the right amount of medicine.**

Don't cut down on the amount of medicine you take if you are feeling good. And don't take more medicine than usual if your chest feels tight unless your nurse or doctor told you to. Your body needs the correct amount of medicine, no more and no less, to keep you from having an asthma attack.

### **Keep your inhaler with you – and use it!**

If you use a rescue inhaler, keep it with you wherever you go. Put it in your pocket or purse. That way you'll have it with you when you need it. Check your inhaler every once in a while to make sure it still has medicine in it. They do run out!

Also make sure you ask your health care provider how to use your inhaler so that it works best for you.

### **Tell your friends, teachers and people you work with that you have asthma.**

It probably won't be the first thing you tell them about yourself. But telling people you spend time with that you have asthma will help in many ways. It will make it easier for them to help you if you do have an attack. It will keep them from getting scared. And it might save you a trip to the emergency room.

### **Don't limit yourself.**

A number of Olympic and professional athletes have asthma. Don't think you can't be part of the team because you have asthma. You can do what anyone else can do.

You may need to take asthma medicine before you work out, but don't let your asthma keep you away from sports or activities you love.

Swimming is especially good if you have asthma because you breathe in warm, humid air as you swim. Sports that have some "down time" (like baseball) might be easier to manage than those that keep you in constant motion (like soccer). But if you love a sport or activity, chances are that, working with your health care providers, you'll be able to figure out a way to play.

**Figure out what triggers your asthma attacks.**

Be a detective. Use the clues you have to figure out what causes you to have an attack. It may be cigarette smoke in the air, your own smoking, dust, pets or something else. If you can figure out what causes an attack, you can stay away from those triggers.

**Learn how you feel when an attack is coming on, then get the help you need right away.**

Before you have an attack, does your chest feel tight? Do you feel tired? Do you feel like it is hard to catch your breath?

If you know what you feel like before you have an attack, you can get the help you need. Don't tough it out and pretend that it isn't happening. That can lead you to the emergency room.

Some people use a peak flow meter to help them learn when an attack may be on the way. Talk to your health care provider to find out if a peak flow meter can help you. And make sure you and your doctor have a detailed written treatment plan worked out that will help you know what to do if you feel an asthma attack coming on.

Having asthma can be a drag. But it can also be something that you rarely have to worry about. How you control your asthma can make the difference.

If you take your asthma seriously, you can get on with the serious business of having fun with the rest of your life.

