



Fall/Winter 2016

Asthma Is your asthma under control?

Asthma symptoms can be sneaky. Sometimes they change so slowly that you don't notice it. Then suddenly you're reaching for your rescue inhaler.

With help, however, you can head off these unwelcome surprises. First, you can learn what good asthma control looks—and feels—like.

For instance, you're in control when you can:

- Be active without symptoms like shortness of breath or chest tightness

- Sleep all night without coughing or wheezing
- Not miss work or school due to asthma
- Avoid trips to the hospital because of asthma attacks

Two key signs your asthma control may be slipping:

- Your peak flow readings drop.
- You use rescue medications more than two days a week.

It's a good idea to track your symptoms. Your peak flow meter can help. You can also ask friends or family to help. That way, you and your health care provider can see if there are ways to manage your asthma better. And you can change your asthma plan if needed.

Sources: American Lung Association (www.lung.org); National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

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Mercy Care Plan is administered by Aetna Medicaid Administrators, LLC, an Aetna company.

Contact us

Mercy Care Plan, 4350 E. Cotton Center Blvd., Building D, Phoenix, AZ 85040

Member Services: **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879** (TTY **7-1-1**)

Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

www.MercyCarePlan.com

Spirometry: A must-have test

To help you breathe better, your doctor needs to know how well your lungs are working. One way to find out is with spirometry.

Done regularly, this test shows if your lung function has changed over time. This is useful information that can guide your treatment plan.

Here are three common questions you may have about this test:

1. **What does it measure?** Spirometry measures the amount and speed of the air you blow out.
2. **How is it done?** First, you take a deep breath. Then you blow out as hard as you can into a device called a spirometer. This records the results.
3. **Why do it?** Spirometry is an important test. It helps your doctor know whether your asthma or COPD is under control. If it's not, then your doctor can make changes to your medicine.

Sources: *American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (www.aaaai.org); National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (www.nhlbi.nih.gov)*



Need help? A care manager can tell you more about asthma and help you connect with your provider. Call Member Services and ask for the Care Management Department.

Do the holidays stress you out?

Winter can be a difficult time of year. The weather changes and the holidays are upon us. Having a chronic condition can add to these challenges. Sometimes that causes depression and anxiety. That, in turn, can make your condition worse. It can also hurt family and friend relationships and other areas of your life.

If you feel down or out-of-sorts for a couple weeks or

more, tell your doctor. A simple, online questionnaire can help start that discussion. Go to **www.adaa.org** and click on “Live and Thrive.” On the “Ask and Learn” page, you’ll find a link to a depression screening tool. After you answer the questions, print the results and share them with your doctor.

Source: *Anxiety and Depression Association of America (www.adaa.org)*

Flu season is here: Have you gotten your shot?

Your best bet for avoiding the flu? Get a shot every year.

That’s true for just about everyone. And if you have a chronic condition, it’s even more important. Try to get the shot as soon as you can in the fall.

Source: *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)*