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Tips for Better Asthma Control

Poorly controlled asthma can cause extra doctor visits, higher medication costs, hospitalizations, and even death. Keeping your asthma under the best control possible can prevent these and other problems. Consider taking these steps to control your asthma better.

See Your Medical Provider Regularly, even when You Feel Well

Regular medical visits are essential for monitoring your asthma and keeping it under good control. Asthma is a chronic disease. It's always present, even when you don't have symptoms, so it's important to evaluate it regularly with your medical provider. Make sure you have a written asthma care plan and can follow it.

Understand How to Use the Two Main Types of Asthma Medications

- **Controller Medications**

These medications control the lung inflammation that causes asthma, and they are the cornerstone of chronic asthma control. You must take these medications regularly. If you don't, asthma control usually worsens. Don't use these medications on an "as-needed" basis only when you feel like your asthma is deteriorating; they do not work when used this way. Inhaled steroids are the most common type of controller.

- **Rescue Medications**

These medications are used on an "as-needed" basis when you develop symptoms. They usually act quickly but only last a few hours and do not control your underlying asthma condition. Increasing the use of these medications is often a sign that your asthma control has gotten worse. Always contact your healthcare provider promptly if you need to use your rescue medication more often than the directions indicate.

Use a Peak Flow Meter

A peak flow meter will monitor your asthma control even when you don't feel symptoms. Asthma control can worsen without symptoms. A peak flow meter can detect when this is happening. Carefully follow your medical provider's instructions on using the meter, so your results are accurate. Also, keep a record of your peak flow meter readings as directed by your medical provider.

Reduce or Eliminate Exposure to Triggers

Each person has different things that worsen their asthma. Examples include smoke, exercise, animal dander, and many others. It's important to know what your specific triggers are and to avoid them.

Know the Signs of Worsening Asthma Control

Besides an outright asthma attack, you should suspect that your asthma control might be worsening whenever:

- ✓ You use your rescue medication more often than at baseline
- ✓ Medications don't work as well as usual
- ✓ Asthma interferes with sleeping
- ✓ You get symptoms with your regular activities
- ✓ Peak flows fall below 80% of your personal best
- ✓ Asthma attacks increase in frequency