

ASTHMA DISEASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Welcome to Better Health

Humana Military and TRICARE East are pleased to offer an **asthma disease management program** just for you.

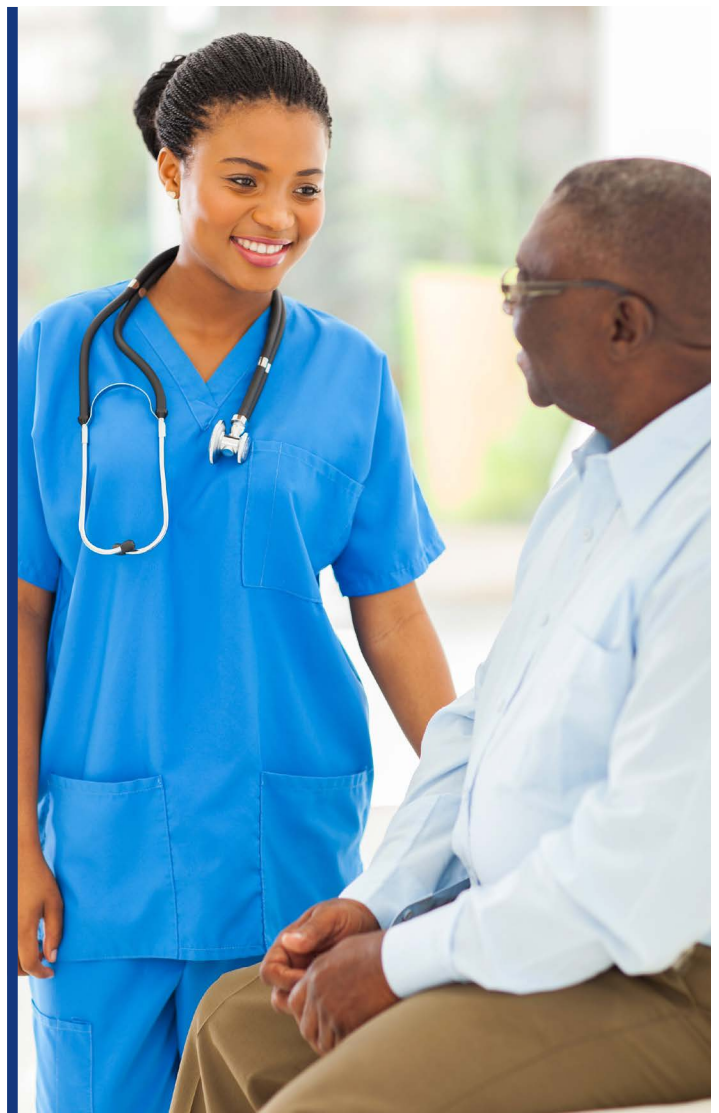
Nothing is more important than your health. When you have a chronic condition, staying healthy is often more difficult. You may need help in understanding your condition and identifying and managing your symptoms. That's what this health improvement program is all about. This brochure provides you with valuable information and guidance to help you take control of your health.

We believe you will benefit greatly as a participant in the asthma management program. This program is offered to you at no cost.

Please visit our website at [HumanaMilitary.com/DM](https://www.humanamilitary.com/DM) or call (800) 881-9227 for more information about asthma and our disease management initiative.

Controlling Your Asthma

1. Schedule and keep regular appointments with your doctor.
2. Lose weight if you are overweight.
3. Do not smoke.
4. Avoid **irritants** and **allergens** by educating yourself with the information in this brochure.



EAST REGION

[HumanaMilitary.com](https://www.humanamilitary.com)

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Commonly Asked Asthma Questions and Answers

WHAT IS ASTHMA?

? Asthma is a disease that causes the airways (the tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs), to become inflamed.

The inflammation causes the airways to become sensitive to allergens or irritants. In reaction to these substances, the tissue lining in the airways swells, narrowing air passages. The narrowing reduces airflow to lung tissue, resulting in symptoms like wheezing, coughing, chest tightness and trouble breathing. With proper treatment and self-management, asthma can be controlled.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ASTHMA?

- Shortness of breath
- Tightness, pain or pressure in the chest
- Wheezing—a high-pitched whistling sound when exhaling
- Persistent cough (waking up often in the middle of the night with shortness of breath, chest tightness or coughing)
- Cold symptoms lasting more than 10 days

To **diagnose asthma**, your doctor may ask you questions about:

- Your symptoms (such as what seems to trigger attacks, how often you have flare-ups) and what medications you take
- History of asthma in your family
- Your work and home environments
- Your participation in various activities

Your doctor will listen to your breathing and heartbeat, and will check your nose, ears, eyes and throat for signs of allergies.

Tests commonly used to diagnose patients with asthma and track their control:

- **Lung function tests** will measure how well your lungs are working. You may be asked to blow into a spirometer, which measures how much and how fast you breathe out air. Lung function tests can tell your doctor how open or narrow your airways are and whether certain medications will make your asthma better.
- **Special allergy tests** may be performed to determine if you are allergic to such things as pollen, dust and animal dander that can trigger asthma attacks. These may be skin tests or a blood test.

WHAT CAUSES AN ASTHMA ATTACK?

Different factors can trigger an asthma attack in each person. Common triggers are:

- Infections like colds, viruses, flu and sinus infections
- Allergens like pollen, mold spores, pet dander and dust mites
- Irritants including air pollution or strong odors from perfumes or cleaning solutions
- Tobacco smoke
- Exercise or exertion
- Cold air or changes in temperature or humidity
- Strong emotions such as anxiety, laughter, crying and stress

In people with asthma, exposure to even the slightest amount of an irritant or allergen like smoke, pollen, dust or fumes can bring on an attack.

HOW IS ASTHMA TREATED?

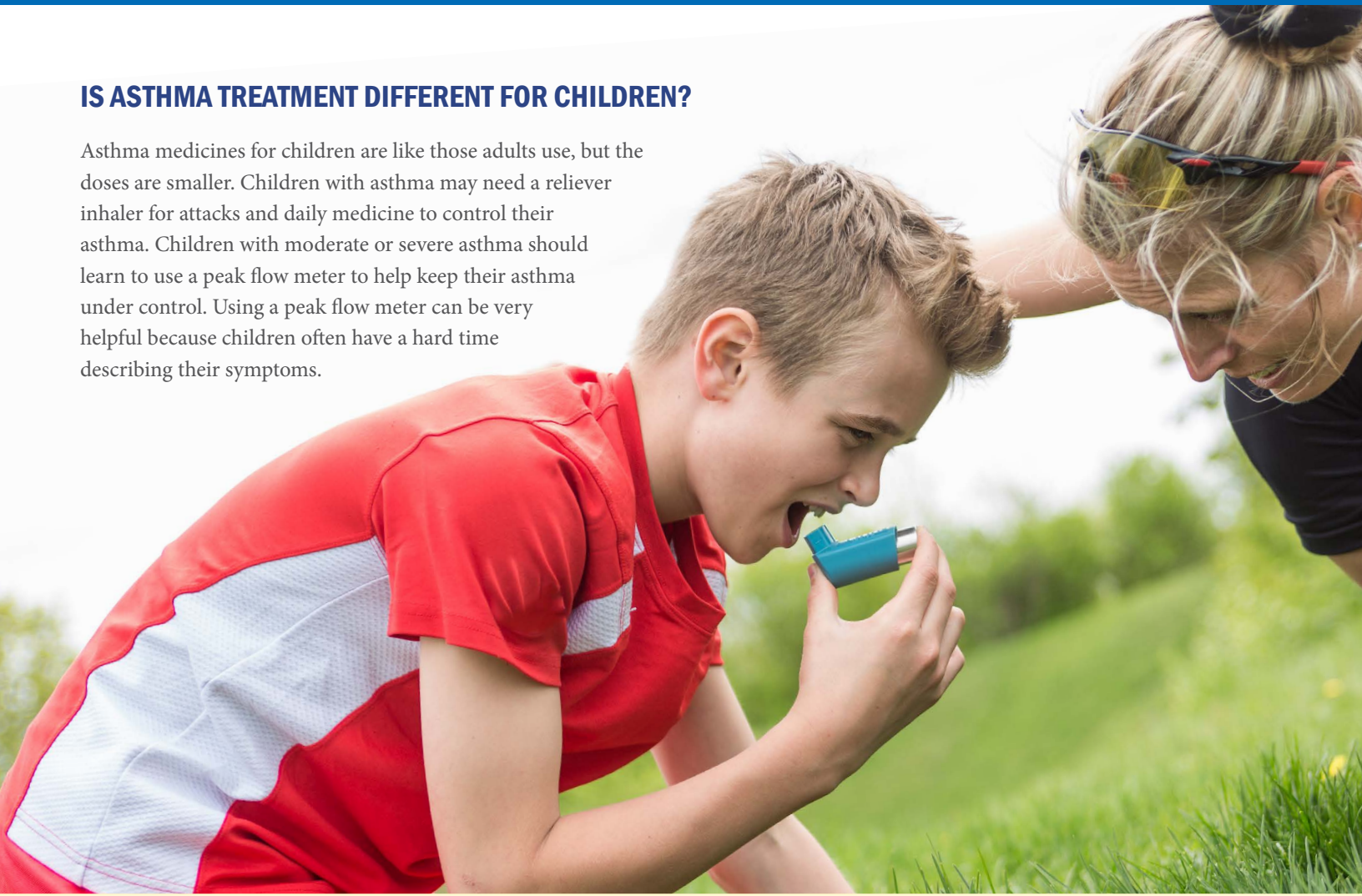
Your doctor will work with you to decide on treatment goals to control your asthma. Asthma treatment typically includes:

- Avoidance of things that bring on asthma symptoms or make symptoms worse
- Medications to control asthma symptoms, often called “controller medications”
- Reliever medications taken for immediate relief of symptoms
- An asthma action plan, developed with the help of your disease management nurse, that supports your doctor’s advice and treatment recommendations
- Monitoring your symptoms so you can recognize when your symptoms are getting worse and respond quickly to prevent or stop an asthma attack



IS ASTHMA TREATMENT DIFFERENT FOR CHILDREN?

Asthma medicines for children are like those adults use, but the doses are smaller. Children with asthma may need a reliever inhaler for attacks and daily medicine to control their asthma. Children with moderate or severe asthma should learn to use a peak flow meter to help keep their asthma under control. Using a peak flow meter can be very helpful because children often have a hard time describing their symptoms.



HOW DO I USE A PEAK FLOW METER?



As part of your asthma action plan, your disease management nurse can talk you through how to use a peak flow meter. Your “peak flow” is how fast you can push air out of your lungs.

- Move the peak flow meter’s marker to “0” or the lowest number on the scale.
- Stand or sit up straight.
- Take a deep breath.
- Close your lips around the meter’s mouthpiece, making sure your tongue does not block the opening.
- Blow into the mouthpiece as hard and fast as you can.
- Write down the number that shows on the scale.
- Repeat the steps above two more times.
- Write down the highest of the three numbers in your peak flow diary – this is your peak flow number.

What are the benefits of using a peak flow meter?

- To help you see how well your written asthma action plan is working and whether it needs to be modified
- To tell you that an asthma episode may occur soon
- To show you when to use medication
- To help you know when to call your doctor
- To help you decide whether to go to the doctor, the emergency room or call 911

To find your ideal or **personal best peak flow number**, do the following for two weeks:

1. Take readings when you wake up and before you go to sleep.
2. Take readings before and after you take your inhaled medication.
3. Keep track of the results and share them with your doctor and disease management nurse; the highest number you reach during the two-week period is your personal best peak flow number.

Asthma Inhalers

HOW DO I USE AN INHALER?



Inhaled medication must get into your lungs to work. Your healthcare provider will show you these steps to follow in using your inhaler:

1. Remove the cap and shake the inhaler.
2. Breathe out.
3. Hold the inhaler as instructed.
4. Breathe in slowly through your mouth as you press down on the inhaler.
5. Keep breathing in slowly and deeply.
6. Hold your breath for 10 seconds. Breathe out. Repeat as instructed.

Some people have trouble using an inhaler the right way. Your healthcare provider can give you a spacer, holding chamber or nebulizer to make it easier for you to take your medication. A spacer or holding chamber attaches to your inhaler and will help direct the medication into your lungs.

HOW DO I USE A SPACER OR HOLDING CHAMBER?

Attach the spacer or holding chamber to your inhaler:

1. Shake well.
2. Press the inhaler button to release a puff of medicine into the spacer or holding chamber.
3. Breathe out, and then breathe in slowly and deeply on the mouthpiece.
4. Hold your breath for 10 seconds. Breathe out.
5. Repeat as instructed.

HOW DO I USE A NEBULIZER?

A nebulizer turns your medications into a mist, breathed in through a face mask or mouthpiece.

1. Pour the instructed amount of saline into the nebulizer.
2. Add the instructed amount of medication.
3. Attach the mouthpiece or mask to the nebulizer.
4. Put your mouth around the mouthpiece, or place the mask to your face.
5. Take slow, deep breaths; hold each breath for one to two seconds before breathing out.
6. Continue until the medication is gone.
7. Rinse the equipment after each use by following the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY DOCTOR OR CLINIC?



Dealing with a problem early can prevent a severe problem from taking place. Call your doctor if you experience any of these symptoms:

- You are coughing up mucus
- Your attack does not respond to your reliever medications
- You are unable to sleep because of wheezing and/or coughing
- Your peak flow volumes have dropped to less than 80 percent of your personal best
- You are short of breath more often than before
- You are breathing faster than usual

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK IMMEDIATE CARE?

Seek immediate care at a clinic, emergency room or call 911 if you experience any of these symptoms:

- Symptoms worsen despite reliever medications
- Your peak flow numbers are half your usual numbers, you have taken your prescribed medication and your peak flow number does not return to the yellow or green zone and stay there
- Your lips and/or fingernails turn gray or blue
- You are rapidly getting worse over a few hours
- You are unable to say four or five words due to shortness of breath, wheezing or you are gasping for air

Focus on slow and easy breathing while you wait for immediate care. Sit upright and try to remain as calm and relaxed as you can.



Irritants



Cigarette, pipe and cigar smoke can affect asthma severely. To help these symptoms:

- Do not smoke.
- Avoid secondhand smoke—don't allow anyone to smoke in your home or car.
- Use an indoor air-cleaning device; it will not only reduce smoke in the air but will also help control mold and animal dander.

Wood smoke is a possible asthma trigger. Avoid fireplaces and wood-burning stoves. Do not use kerosene heaters.

Strong odors from paint, cleaning products, garden chemicals, perfumes, lotions, hair sprays and deodorants can trigger asthma problems. Tips for improvement include:

- Use perfume-free products.
- Use scent-free cleaning products.
- Do not burn potpourri or scented candles in your home.
- Leave your home while it is being painted, and only return when the odor is gone.



Outdoor triggers—On days when air quality is reported as poor, stay indoors as much as possible. Weather changes can affect your lungs and airways. Stay indoors when the weather is very hot or very cold. If you do go out in cold weather, wear a scarf over your nose and mouth to protect your lungs.



Illness, such as sinus problems or upper respiratory tract infections, can make your lungs more sensitive. To improve resistance:

- Get a flu shot every year.
- Avoid people who have colds.
- Wash your hands frequently during the flu season.
- Treat cold symptoms immediately—talk to your doctor.

Emotions and stress that come with feeling upset or excited can change your breathing and trigger asthma symptoms. Relax and breathe in slowly through your nose, hold for two counts, then pucker your lips and breathe slowly out through your lips for four counts.



Exercise-induced asthma—Exercise can help with your asthma by reducing shortness of breath and improving your overall health. Exercise can also trigger asthma episodes. Exercise-induced asthma occurs when your airways become narrow and constricted within minutes after beginning to exercise. The attack will generally peak in severity about five to 10 minutes after starting to exercise and may continue for 20 to 30 minutes. Symptoms include shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing and tightness in the chest. You can exercise with asthma if you follow your doctor's instructions, take your asthma medication before you exercise, do warm-up and cool-down exercises and do not push yourself.





Allergens



House dust mites are tiny insects that live in dust and are most often found on mattresses, pillows, carpets, bed covers and upholstered furniture. Dust mite droppings may trigger your asthma. Consider the following tips to help minimize allergens:

- Wash bed pillows, sheets and covers every week.
- Use the hot water temperature on the washer.
- Use special dust-proof mattress and pillow covers.
- Use a dehumidifier (dust mites need moist air to live).
- Consider removing carpets, extra pillows and upholstered furniture, especially in your bedroom.



Animal dander such as skin, fur or feathers from dogs, cats, birds and small rodents can cause your airways to swell and become inflamed. If you are found to be allergic to your pet, consider the following:

- If possible, find a new home for your pet.
- If you want to keep a pet, try to keep it outside or, at least, out of your bedroom.
- Keep your pet away from carpet and upholstered furniture.
- Wash your hands after you handle your pet.
- Bathe your pet once a week.



Tree, grass and weed pollens are common allergens. The following tips may be helpful:

- Stay inside when the pollen count is high.
- Keep your windows closed.
- Use air conditioning in both your home and car.



Molds may cause asthma flare-ups and are found indoors, outdoors and in damp places. If mold affects your asthma, consider the following actions:

- Use a dehumidifier to reduce the humidity in your home to less than 50 percent.
- Have someone regularly clean tubs, sinks and other mold and mildew sites using a cleanser with bleach.
- Avoid damp places such as basements, bathrooms and closets.
- Keep your furnace and air conditioner filters clean.
- Clean air ducts regularly.
- Avoid sources of mold outdoors such as wet leaves and garden debris.



Cockroaches leave droppings that may be an asthma trigger for you. Tips for improvement include:

- Keep your kitchen clean and take your garbage out daily.
- Store your food in tightly sealed containers.
- Use traps and poison baits to control a cockroach problem if one is present.
- Do not use chemical sprays unless you can be away from home during the spraying.



Food, medicine and cosmetic allergies can cause asthma flare-ups and include the following:

- Food sulfates are additives found in juices, beer, wine, vegetables, dried fruits, and shellfish if they are packed in ice and some processed foods.
- Medicine examples include aspirin, aspirin-like pain relievers or antibiotics.