

ASTHMA INFORMATION SHEET

Asthma is a common long-term condition that can cause coughing, wheezing, chest tightness and breathlessness. The severity of these symptoms varies from person to person. In most people asthma can be controlled well for most of the time, although some people may have more persistent problems. Occasionally asthma symptoms can get gradually or suddenly worse. This is known as an "asthma attack", although doctors sometimes use the term "exacerbation". Severe attacks may require hospital treatment and can be life threatening.

Why should I attend my annual asthma review at the GP surgery?

As asthma is a long-term and variable condition, regular contact with your healthcare team will help to ensure you are on the right treatment, used correctly, at the right time. This can prevent your asthma from getting worse, which as well as making you feel very unwell, could lead to a hospital admission. Annual checkups help to ensure your asthma is under control and that your current treatment is still appropriate. It is an opportunity to have your medication increased or decreased depending on your symptoms. Regular reviews help you form a good relationship with our asthma nurses, making it easier for you to discuss your symptoms or concerns. The more the team knows, the more they can help.

What happens at my annual asthma review?

You will discuss with the nurse your current treatment and any symptoms you may have. She will be able to answer any queries you may have about asthma and advise you on increasing or reducing your medication as needed. She will measure your height and weight along with taking a peak flow measurement. The nurse will also be able to check how you use your inhalers and arrange for an alternative if they no longer suit. The nurse can issue you with a personal asthma action plan, which includes information on your medication, how to recognize when you are getting worse and what steps to take if this happens.

There are external factors that can affect your asthma control, such as allergies and smoking. Your review is an opportunity to discuss these and access help where required.

What lifestyle changes will help me?

- Stopping smoking. This will also reduce your chances of developing other diseases such as heart disease, COPD and cancer. You can get help and support from 0800 052 5855 and www.smokefree.nhs.uk
- Increasing your regular exercise if needed. Advice can be obtained from www.prescription4exercise.com
- Weight loss if your BMI is greater than 25.

What medication may help me?

- There are various short and long acting inhalers that can open up the airways and help to Reduce inflammation. Combination inhalers are also available.
- Oral tablets can also be prescribed.
- If symptoms are severe oral steroids may be prescribed.