A S T H M A

Although asthma is a life long, chronic disease, it can be more severe for some people than others. There is no cure for asthma but with the right medication and by avoiding things that trigger your asthma, you can control your asthma and participate in activities just like everyone else.

We all have questions we want to ask our provider but we don't always know what to ask. We asked health care providers what are the most important questions a patient should ask. Some of these questions you can ask on your first visit with your provider or when you see him or her for follow up visits. Choose the questions you think are the most important and start with those. ***Don't try to ask all these questions in one visit.***

There are a few different types of health care providers who treat people who have asthma. Primary care providers like family practice doctors, pediatricians, internal medicine doctors, nurse practitioners, nurse clinicians and physician assistants all treat people who have asthma. Sometimes primary care providers will send their patients to doctors who specialize in asthma like pulmonologists or allergists. The type of provider you see is up to you – but it is also your job to make sure your health care provider is helping you take care of your asthma correctly.

Remember, the next time you see your health care provider, be sure to bring these items with you:

1. Your asthma action plan which is also called an AAP.
2. Your daily asthma diary or record that keeps track of your peak flow readings and or symptoms. Some people do not keep asthma diaries but it's something you can ask your provider about.
3. Your peak flow meter which is also called a PFM if you use one.
4. All your medications as well as your spacer or holding chamber.
5. The name, phone and fax number of your child's school nurse. The provider can fill out a form or send an AAP to the school nurse with instructions on how to help manage your child's asthma.
6. Any questions or concerns you have. You should write your questions down to help you remember what you want to ask.

A D U L T S

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT ASTHMA

KEY QUESTIONS

- Why do I need to take asthma medicine everyday if I feel okay?
- Is it okay if I am using my rescue (quick relief) inhaler more than two times a week?
- What is an Asthma Action Plan and do I need one?
- What happens if we don't do anything to treat my asthma?

UNDERSTANDING MY ASTHMA

1. What is asthma and what caused my asthma?

2. Is my asthma serious?

3. Will my asthma go away?

4. Am I doing something to make my asthma act up?
   - Are there things that can trigger my asthma?
   - How do I get rid of the triggers that are making my asthma worse?
   - Is something in the outside air making my asthma worse?
   - Is something in my home or work making my asthma worse?

5. How do I know when I am going to have an asthma attack?
   - What should I do when I have an asthma attack?

6. Are there any tests I should have to learn more about my asthma?
   - What is spirometry?
   - Should I have allergy testing done to figure out what triggers my asthma?

A D U L T S

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT ASTHMA

TREATING MY ASTHMA

1. Are there different kinds of medicine to treat my asthma?
   - What is the difference between a controller and a rescue medicine?
   - When should I use each type of medicine?
   - Why do I need to take asthma medicine everyday if I feel okay?

2. Is it okay if I am using my rescue (quick relief) inhaler more than two times a week?

3. What are the signs or symptoms that my medicine is not working?

4. How long will I need to take medicine for my asthma?

5. Can you show me how to use my inhaler?
   - Do I need to clean my inhaler and can you show me how?
   - How can I tell if my inhaler is empty?

6. What is a holding chamber or spacer?
   - Do I need to use either a holding chamber or spacer?
   - Which medicines need to be used with a holding chamber or spacer?
   - Do I need to use a holding chamber or spacer every time I take my medicine?
   - Do I need to clean my holding chamber or spacer and can you show me how?

7. How will I know if I need to see a specialist to treat and manage my asthma?
   - What type of specialist should I see?

MANAGING MY ASTHMA

1. How often should I come in to have my asthma checked?

2. What is an Asthma Action Plan and do I need one?
   - How do I use an Asthma Action Plan?

3. Do I need to use my rescue inhaler before I exercise?

4. What is a peak flow meter and do I need one?
   - Can you show me how to use a peak flow meter?
   - How do I clean my peak flow meter and can you show me how?

5. What happens if we don't do anything to treat my asthma?

asthma

03/09, Minnesota Dept of Health, www.health.state.mn.us/asthma

A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER MAY ASK YOU...

1. What symptoms are you having and when did they start?
   - How often do the symptoms happen?
   - Are you coughing, wheezing, or are you short of breath?
   - Are you having any symptoms, like coughing at night?

2. Can you think of things that cause your symptoms?
   - When do your symptoms occur and how bad are they?
   - Is there anything that makes your asthma symptoms better such as going inside or resting?

3. Have you moved to a new home or apartment lately or started a new job?

4. Who else takes care of your child and do they smoke or have pets?

5. Have you started taking any new medications recently?

6. Did you have asthma or lung problems when you were a child?
   - Does anyone in your family have asthma, or lung problems?

7. Do you or anyone in your family have allergies or hay fever?
   - Do you know what you're allergic too or were you ever tested to see what you're allergic to?
   - If so, during what time of the year do your allergies appear?
   - Are you taking anything for your allergies?

8. Do you or anyone else in your household smoke?

9. Do you have any pets at home or at places where you spend a lot of time?

10. What kind of work do you do?
    - Are you ever exposed to things at work that set off your breathing troubles?

11. What worries you most about your or your child's asthma or medications?

12. We can have you see an Asthma Educator to help you learn more about your asthma.
    - Would you like our office to set up an appointment for you?

Remember, nothing can replace the individual care you receive from your health care provider, and don't be surprised if your provider doesn't ask all the questions listed. However, it's okay to offer information you think is important your provider should know. It's okay to ask your provider questions. Don't leave until your provider has answered all your questions and you clearly understand the answers.

Be sure to bring these pages with you each time you visit your health care provider. By working closely with your provider, you can be successful in self-managing your or your child's asthma!

Accomplishing Strategies Together for asthma Healthier Minnesotans with Asthma