

# BREATH | *taking*

Inhale knowledge, exhale worries.



Learn how to better manage your asthma.

# What is asthma?

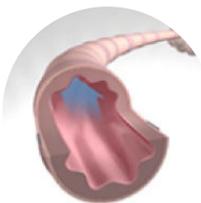


**Asthma is a chronic, or long-term, disease that inflames and narrows the airways of your lungs.**

Asthma causes a variety of symptoms that can worsen at any time, making breathing difficult. Asthma is a disease that cannot be cured, but it can be managed. Some days you may not have symptoms, but this doesn't mean your asthma has gone away. Asthma doesn't have to slow you down. There are things you can do to help control your asthma.

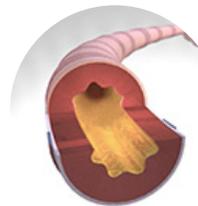
## **The Airways of a Person Without Asthma**

This is how the airways look in a person without asthma. Air can move freely through the airways. But when you have asthma, inflammation and constriction can affect how air flows through the airways.



## **Airway Inflammation**

Inflammation makes the airway irritated and swollen. The swelling can narrow the airway and decrease airflow. The inflammation may be there even when you are not having asthma symptoms.

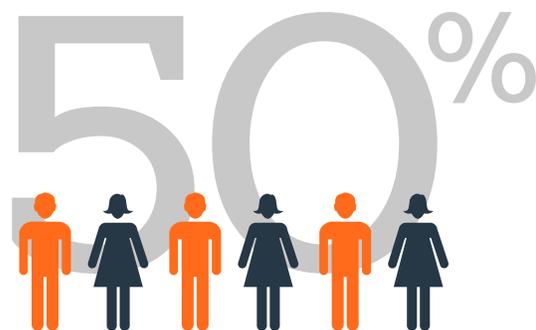


## **Did you know?**

When you have inflammation in your lungs and more daily asthma symptoms, your asthma may be worse than you think.

If you have severe asthma, the inflammation may be caused by an increase in eosinophils, a type of white blood cell.

**Almost 50% of people who have severe asthma have an increase of eosinophils in their lungs,** which could cause more frequent asthma attacks.



**OF PEOPLE WITH SEVERE ASTHMA HAVE INCREASED EOSINOPHILS**

# What's the difference between asthma & severe asthma?

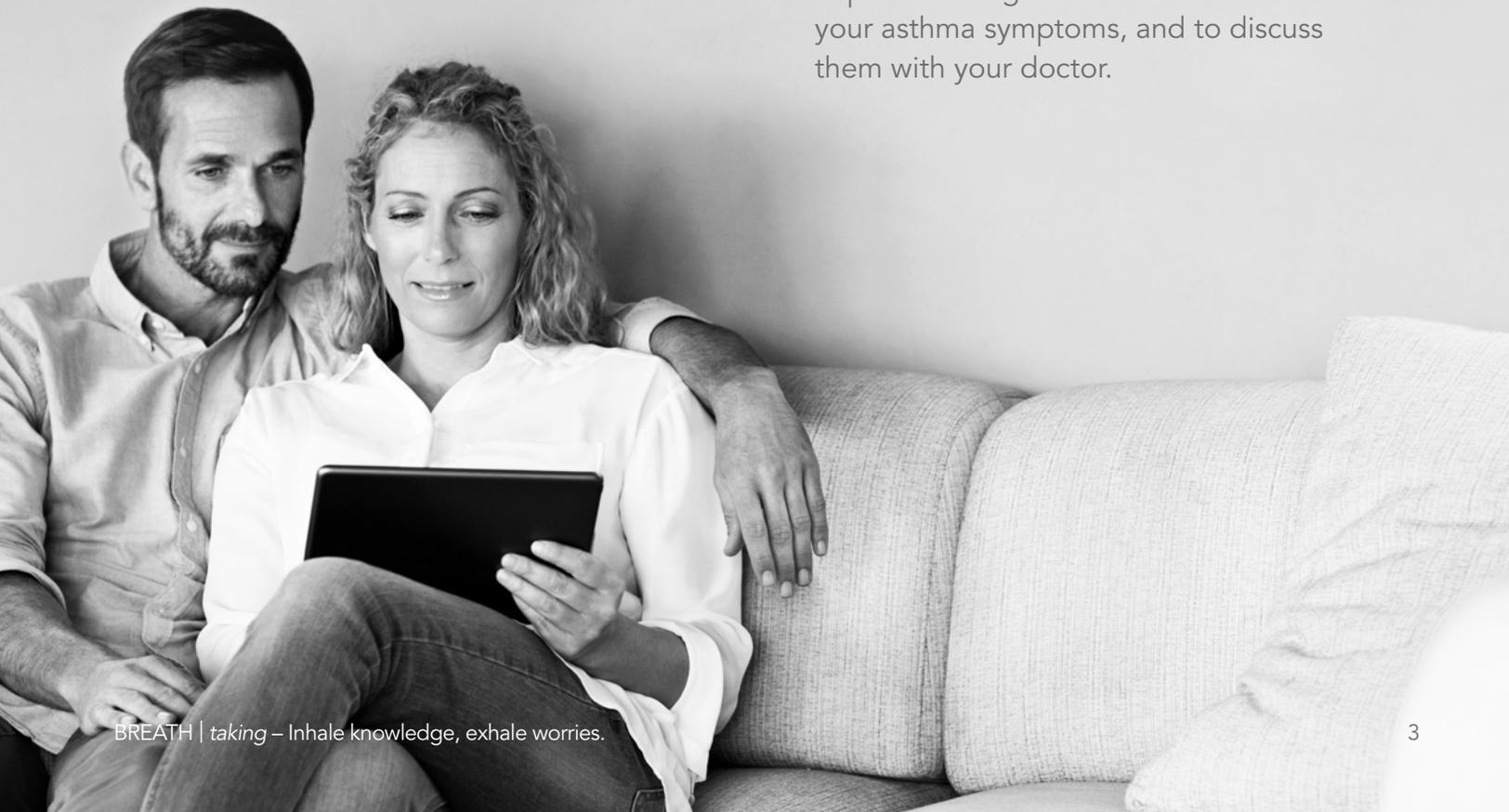
If keeping your asthma controlled requires treatment with daily asthma medications to prevent it from becoming uncontrolled, it may be severe. It can also remain uncontrolled even with the use of these medications.

Remember, your asthma may be severe if you're taking daily medications and are still experiencing:

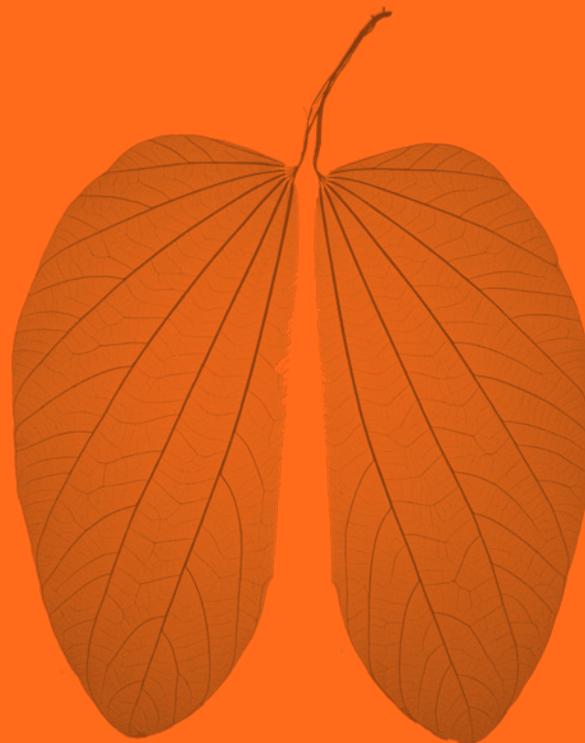
1. **Poor symptom control**, even when you're taking all your medications and following your healthcare provider's advice
2. **Two or more severe asthma attacks per year** that require three or more days of oral steroids (like prednisone)
3. **One or more trips to urgent care, ER, or even hospitalization** due to asthma attacks over the past year

## Does this sound like you?

If it does, it's important to realize that this information is just a starting point for a discussion with your doctor. And it's okay if you're not sure whether your asthma is severe. It can be hard to make sense of your asthma symptoms, especially since asthma symptoms can change over time. The important thing is to be honest about your asthma symptoms, and to discuss them with your doctor.



# Control your asthma better by knowing what triggers it.



Learning what triggers your asthma symptoms gives you the chance to avoid those things. If you've been writing in your [asthma journal](#), you already have a head start in identifying your triggers.

Think about where you were and what you were doing when you noticed a symptom. There's a good chance there was something nearby, or some activity that you were doing, that triggered it. Remember that for every trigger, there may be ways that you can cut down or cut out your exposure.

Some people can feel overwhelmed by trying to avoid triggers. It's okay if at first you feel like you can't manage your triggers very well. After all, it can be a long list, and the triggers seem to be everywhere. Dust mites, pollen, your best friend's cologne... it can be hard to avoid them all!

But it's important to figure out which ones are actually triggers for you. Work with your doctor to learn how to find out which triggers cause you the most trouble.

## Taking control of your asthma means you may:

- have fewer limits to daily activities, and better scores on breathing tests
- need a rescue inhaler fewer times a day
- have fewer asthma attacks that require oral steroids (like prednisone), which could send you to a hospital
- not experience symptoms throughout the day, every day, or wake up every night due to asthma symptoms

# It's time to put **your** **health** first.

Asthma symptoms may come and go. It may be easy to get used to your symptoms. And it can be hard to put your lungs at the top of your to-do list. That's why it's important to find ways to take care of your lungs. Putting your health first is one of the best gifts you can give yourself and the important people in your life.

## Did you know?

Many people with asthma need two kinds of asthma medications to manage asthma symptoms. However, some people have asthma that is more severe, and while some can be controlled, others may benefit from a more targeted treatment to stay controlled.

## Is your asthma putting you at risk?

Scientists are now realizing not all asthma is alike. Some people may have severe asthma. Getting the right treatment for severe asthma is important because **repeated asthma attacks** and inflammation caused by **long-term uncontrolled asthma may lead to damage in the lining of your lungs.**

Together you and your doctor can determine if your severe asthma may be caused by eosinophils. A blood test can measure your eosinophil levels, and help your doctor provide you with the right treatment for your type of asthma.

## Targeted Treatment

If you're on quick-relief and long-term controller medications and you still don't feel in control with your asthma, you may need targeted treatment. Eosinophilic asthma, a type of severe asthma, may require a targeted treatment to stay in control. Current treatment options, when added to standard asthma medications, target eosinophils (white blood cells) that can cause inflammation in your lungs. If you have an overproduction of eosinophils, it may lead to more asthma attacks.



# Think about it.

When was the last time you sat down with your doctor with complete information on what your asthma has been like since your last appointment? Maybe you do this at most appointments, but it's easy to forget what symptoms you had and what their impact on your life was like three months ago, or even three weeks ago.

Life gets busy, doctor's appointments can be brief, and other things might be on your mind. Sometimes it can be hard to admit how much asthma affects your life. That's why it's so important to keep track of your symptoms and share that information with your doctor.

## If I had severe asthma, wouldn't my doctor know this already?

Not necessarily. Asthma symptoms can change over time. Also, your doctor may not understand the extent of your asthma symptoms without complete information from you. That's why it's so important to share the impact asthma has on your daily life.

**Your doctor may refer you to an asthma specialist**, like an allergist or a pulmonary specialist (also called a pulmonologist). These doctors are specially trained to treat asthma. They can help you find the right combination of medication and self-care to help manage your asthma.

Remember to be completely transparent with your doctor to ensure you're getting the right care for your asthma.



# You deserve to have control.

If you feel like you aren't getting the control you want, talk to your doctor about how you may achieve that. You deserve to feel as well as you can. What you probably really want is a cure for your asthma. Since there is no cure currently, it's important to create your own personalized asthma goals with help from your doctor. Setting goals for your asthma may help you and your doctor better manage your asthma.

## How can you choose the right goals?

We're going to show you three steps that can help you choose the goals you'd like to reach. We'll give you an example to help you get started, and you can use that as a guide when filling out your own Asthma Goals Chart.

**Step 1:** Start out by choosing two or three asthma goals.

**Step 2:** For each asthma goal you choose, briefly say why that goal is important to you. What will it allow you to do or feel or be?

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### Here's an example:

"I chose waking up less at night because that will give me more time to rest, which will help me to be in a better mood during the day."

**Step 3:** See if you can link your reasons for choosing each asthma goal to one of your core values.

Asthma goals	Why this goal is important to me	This goal supports my core value of...
<i>Example: Waking up less at night</i>	<i>Example: I am more patient when I've had enough sleep</i>	<i>Example: Being a better parent</i>

# You have choices.

People who live with chronic conditions may not be aware of the choices they have. People tend to be much more motivated to do things they have decided to do. You may have noticed this about yourself: Isn't it easier to get things done when it's your idea rather than someone else's?

So, if having a choice is so important for maintaining motivation, how can you stay motivated when so much of asthma care seems like it's a rule, not a choice?

Let's start to answer that question with a list of some common asthma ground rules, and how you can find choices in them.

Asthma Ground Rules	Your Choice Options
1. See your doctor regularly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Choose your appointment day/time.</li><li>- Choose the best doctor for you.</li><li>- Discuss with your doctor how often you want to have follow-up appointments.</li><li>- How do you want to be reminded of appointments? Text? Phone?</li></ul>
2. Track your lung health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Do you want to use paper/pencil?</li><li>- A phone app?</li><li>- Track daily or periodically?</li><li>- What time will you choose to record?</li><li>- Ask your doctor why you're tracking and what tracking tools you could use.</li></ul>
3. Learn as much about asthma self-care as you can	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ask your doctor to recommend educational resources, such as medical books and Internet sites with appropriate asthma information.</li><li>- Consult groups like the American Lung Association.</li></ul>

When you find choices in your asthma ground rules, you do two important things:

- **First**, you find the choices you need to stay motivated.
- **Second**, you customize your asthma treatment to your life, making it easier to stick with it, and potentially making asthma control more likely.

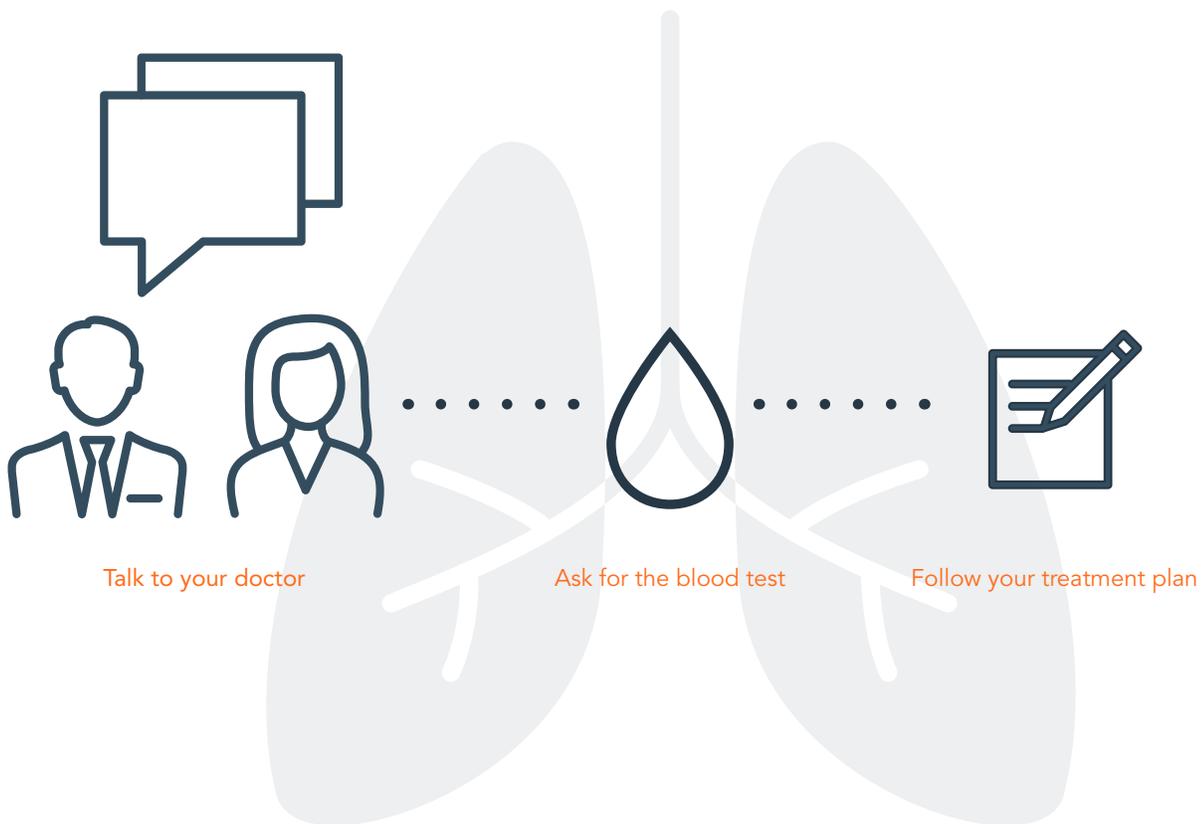


# Rethinking your asthma?

You may not feel like your asthma is severe; most people don't. But, if you have any of the symptoms that make you *rethink* your asthma – you and your doctor can take steps to identify if your asthma is severe and may be caused by eosinophils. A common blood test can measure your eosinophils and is usually part of your routine blood work.

Remember, your asthma is considered severe if:

- You are often awakened throughout the night by your asthma.
- You use your rescue inhaler several times a day.
- Your normal activity is very limited by your asthma.
- You have poor symptom control, even when taking all asthma medications as prescribed.
- You experienced 2 or more asthma attacks in the past year.
- You visited an urgent care, ER, or were hospitalized due to asthma in the past year.



# Help your doctor help you.

If you have a doctor's appointment coming up, be sure to keep your appointment and openly talk about these signs of severe asthma. And if you don't have an appointment scheduled, you may want to make one.

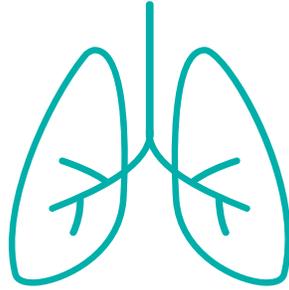
Here are a few tips that may help you get even more from your appointment:

- **Be clear with your priorities:** Asthma is a complex condition, but even so, your time may be limited in your appointment. Help make the most of your time by listing out your questions ahead of time in order of importance. Using a [Doctor Discussion Guide](#) may also help you to prioritize. That way, if you can't get to all your questions, you can be sure to cover your most important ones first. For any questions you don't have time for, ask your doctor if someone else in the office can help.

- **Be confident:** Never forget that you know your body best. So even if you can't always find the right words to talk about certain symptoms or any other aspect of your asthma care, don't give up trying to explain what's going on. Sometimes all it takes is a few tries to make yourself understood.
- **Be focused on teamwork:** Many doctors work with a team of professionals to help their patients with asthma. Nurses, respiratory therapists, physician assistants, nurse educators—they may all be part of the team that's devoted to helping you keep your asthma better controlled.

**If you think you may have severe asthma, don't let the term "severe asthma" scare you. Whatever your symptoms are, an important thing you can do is work in partnership with your doctor to find the best treatment for you.**





## We hope this guide was helpful.

Being better informed about your asthma is a great way to better manage it. If you are looking for more resources or information on asthma, visit [asthma.com](http://asthma.com) for helpful tools and information.

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