



Asthma

UniCare Health Plan of West Virginia, Inc. (UniCare) has a care management program for asthma. This program will help you better understand and manage your asthma. We can assist you to set health goals and create a care plan that fits your lifestyle. You do not have to join the program. You are enrolled as a member of UniCare.

Living with asthma

Asthma is a disease of the branches of the windpipe (bronchial tubes) that carry air in and out of the lungs. Asthma keeps you from getting air in your lungs. Your airways swell, making it hard to breathe.

We want you to know you can take control. Simple steps like avoiding your triggers and using asthma controller medication can make a real difference.

We will keep your doctor informed of your condition and the services we provide you. Your case manager can help you learn how to better manage your asthma.

Things to know:

- Triggers are things you are around every day that can make your asthma worse. Your triggers may include dust, pollen, tobacco smoke and other things at home, work or school. You can improve your asthma if you know your triggers and stay away from them as much as you can.
- The flu or a cold can make your asthma symptoms worse. Other health conditions can make it harder for you to control your asthma as well.
- Signs that your asthma is getting worse include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and a tight feeling in your chest. You may have other signs.
- We can give you more information to help you manage your asthma.
- Your doctor may want to do testing to see how well your asthma is controlled.

Tips to monitor your asthma:

- Use a peak flow meter
We can teach you how to use a peak flow meter. A peak flow meter is a device that measures how much air you can push out of your lungs. You can use your peak flow rate to see if you are having a good or bad asthma day. A lower than normal peak flow rate is an early sign that your asthma is getting worse.
- Use an Asthma Action Plan
An asthma action plan is written information from your doctor that tells you how to manage your asthma. It has things for you to do every day to treat your asthma. It also tells you what to do if you are sick or your asthma is worse. It may tell you to start taking some medicines if your peak flow rate is below a certain number. Your



asthma action plan will help you know when to call your doctor and when to get help right away.

How to take your asthma medications:

- What kind of asthma medicines are you taking?
 1. Quick relief medicines — Can help you if you have an asthma attack or sudden problem breathing. This kind of medicine usually does not last very long. It does not prevent you from having an asthma attack.
 2. Long-term medicines — This medicine does not work right away and is used to help prevent asthma attacks. It will not help you to breathe if you are having an asthma attack.
 3. It is very important to take your medicines just like your doctor tells you even if you are feeling better.
- We can help you know how to take your medications the right way.
- We can help you to use inhalers, spacers, nebulizers and other devices.
- We can help you understand how your medications work.

Ways you can improve or manage your asthma:

- Quit smoking. Quitting smoking can make the biggest improvement in controlling your asthma. We have programs, and there are medications that can assist you in stopping smoking.
- Make short- and long-term goals. We can help you make goals to eat better, exercise and maintain a healthy weight. Goals can be made to fit your lifestyle. We can assist you to make healthy changes one small step at a time to improve your asthma.
- Get a flu shot every year. Ask your doctor if you should have the pneumonia vaccine.

Support to help you manage your asthma:

- We can help you talk to your family or caregiver about your asthma
- We can assist you in finding community programs and resources in your area
- Tips to talk with your doctor and get the most out of your visit:
 1. Ask any questions you may have about your asthma. You can write them down and take them with you to your visit
 2. Follow your doctor's advice – if you have questions or concerns, let your doctor know
 3. Make sure your doctor knows what medicines you are taking

Important screenings:

- Depression
- Other health conditions



- Preventive care screenings such as wellness checkups, mammograms and Pap tests

For more helpful information on managing your asthma

- [Health Library](#)
- [Smokefree.gov](#)
- [American Lung Association](#)
- [AANMA - Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics](#)
- [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute \(NHLBI\)](#)
- [American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology \(AAAAI\)](#)
- [Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America \(AAFA\)](#)

Sources:

*American Lung Association www.lungusa.org/

*National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)

So You Have Asthma: A Guide for Patients and Their Families

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/asthma/have_asthma.htm, accessed November 8, 2013.

*Healthfinder.gov

Use Medicines Safely

<http://www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/everyday-healthy-living/safety/use-medicines-safely>, accessed November 8, 2013.

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