



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Asthma

Asthma can be a very serious illness, but your doctor can help you to manage your symptoms and achieve your best quality of life. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Asthma	A disease that causes inflammation and narrowing of the airways. Common symptoms include difficulty breathing, wheezing, and coughing.
Wheezing	A distinct noise that is made when a person with asthma is having an attack. It is produced by air trying to squeeze through constricted (narrowed) air passages.
Inhaler	Portable, handheld canisters that contain medication that is inhaled into your lungs.
Spacer	A tube-like chamber that attaches to an inhaler. A spacer can help people who are unable to take a deep breath or who are experiencing uncoordinated breathing to get their full dose of medication.
Nebulizer	Another way of delivering medication to your lungs. Nebulizers use oxygen or compressed air to turn a liquid medication into a fine aerosol that can be inhaled.
Bronchodilator	Bronchodilators are substances or medications that increase the diameter of the airways, allowing more air to pass through. There are both short and long acting bronchodilators.
Corticosteroids	Medications which reduce inflammation, used for long-term control of asthma. They can be given as pills or injections but for asthma they are usually inhaled.
Triggers	Things that bring on an asthma attack. For example, asthma related to allergies can be triggered by specific substances. Exercise-induced asthma is triggered by physical activity.
Pulmonary Function Tests (PFT's)	Lung tests that help to diagnose asthma or to guide the treatment of asthma. They usually measure lung capacity and the amount of airflow moving through the lungs (spirometry), the amount of nitric oxide you exhale, or substances such as carbon dioxide in your blood (blood gasses).
Asthma Action Plan	A plan that is created by you and your doctor which outlines your daily treatment regime as well as when you should take specific medications or go to an emergency room.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your asthma.

About Symptoms

- What are the first symptoms of an asthma attack and which symptoms will tell me it is time to use certain medications?
- What symptoms are most serious and when should I get medical attention by calling 911 or going to the emergency room?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- What can I do to reduce my risk of experiencing a serious asthma attack?
- Do you know what has caused my condition or whether my children or other family members may also be at risk of developing asthma?

About Diagnosis

- Will further testing, such as allergy tests, help to identify things that might trigger my asthma symptoms?
- Can you review my pulmonary function tests with me and explain the results?

About Treatment

- Can you review with me the correct way to use my medications (specifically inhalers, spacers, or nebulizers)?
- I understand that an asthma action plan will help me to manage my symptoms on a day-to-day basis, can we go over that now?
- Are there other specialists or types of physicians I need to involve in my care?

About Coping

- What information is important for me to share with my loved ones or people who live with me?
- Are there resources such as support groups you can refer me to that can help me cope with my asthma?

About Living With Asthma

- Are there specific activities or situations that I need to avoid?
