



## DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

# Managing Allergic Asthma

Allergic asthma causes a person's airways to be extra sensitive to certain allergens. Once these allergens get in the body, the immune system overreacts, causing the airways to become inflamed and filled with thick mucus over time. The first step to getting vital treatment for this condition is to understand allergic asthma and talk to your doctor. 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.

<b>Allergen</b>	Any substance your body perceives as dangerous that causes an allergic reaction. Pollen, a powdery substance released by trees and plants, is a common allergen.
<b>Animal Dander</b>	Tiny scales that are shed from animal hair and skin. They float into the air and contribute to household dust. Animal dander is a classic cause of allergic reaction.
<b>Anticholinergic</b>	A medication to open airways by relaxing muscle bands that tighten around airways. These medications do not give immediate relief, but they can be used with quick relief medicines during an asthma attack.
<b>Antihistamine</b>	A medicine to stop the action of histamine, a substance known for causing allergy symptoms, including sneezing and itching.
<b>Anti-inflammatory</b>	A medicine that reduces air inflammation (swelling) and mucus production.
<b>Asthma Action Plan</b>	Written instructions put together by your doctor to help you to manage asthma at home. The action plan includes the medications you take, when to take those medications, what to do when medications aren't working, and when to call your doctor or seek emergency help.
<b>Bronchodilator</b>	A medicine to relax the muscle bands that tighten the airways. This medicine can also help reduce mucus from the lungs.
<b>Beta 2-Agonist</b>	A type of bronchodilator to relax airway muscles. These medications are either quick relief or long-lasting. Short-acting medications are considered rescue medicines.
<b>Bronchospasm</b>	Tightening of the muscle bands surrounding the airways, causing them to narrow.
<b>Nebulizer</b>	A machine that changes liquid into aerosol or mist so it can be inhaled through a mouthpiece or mask. Nebulizers deliver airway-opening medications.
<b>Peak Flow Meter</b>	A handheld device that measures how fast air comes out of the lungs when a person inhales as deeply as possible and then exhales forcefully.
<b>Spacer</b>	A chamber used with a metered dose inhaler to help asthma medication get into the airways better.



## Questions to Ask

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

### About Symptoms

- What are some signs my allergic asthma may be getting worse?
- When should I call my doctor?
- When should I go to the emergency room?
- What factors make my symptoms worse?
- What if I have chest tightness or shortness of breath?

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### About Causes & Risk Factors

- What types of allergens can cause my symptoms?
- Is allergic asthma hereditary?
- Are pollution and other environmental triggers a cause of my symptoms?
- Is having a pet a trigger of allergic asthma?

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### About Diagnosis

- Do I need any tests to determine allergen triggers?
- Is it okay for me to keep my pet?
- Can I vacuum my home?
- How do I get rid of dust and mold in my home?
- Is it okay to exercise?
- Do I need to make any changes at work?

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### About Treatment

- What medicines should I be taking?
- What if I miss a dose or an entire day of treatment?
- Should I adjust my medications if I feel better or worse?
- Which medicines should I take if I am short of breath?
- When should I use a nebulizer instead of an inhaler?
- Do I need allergy shots?

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