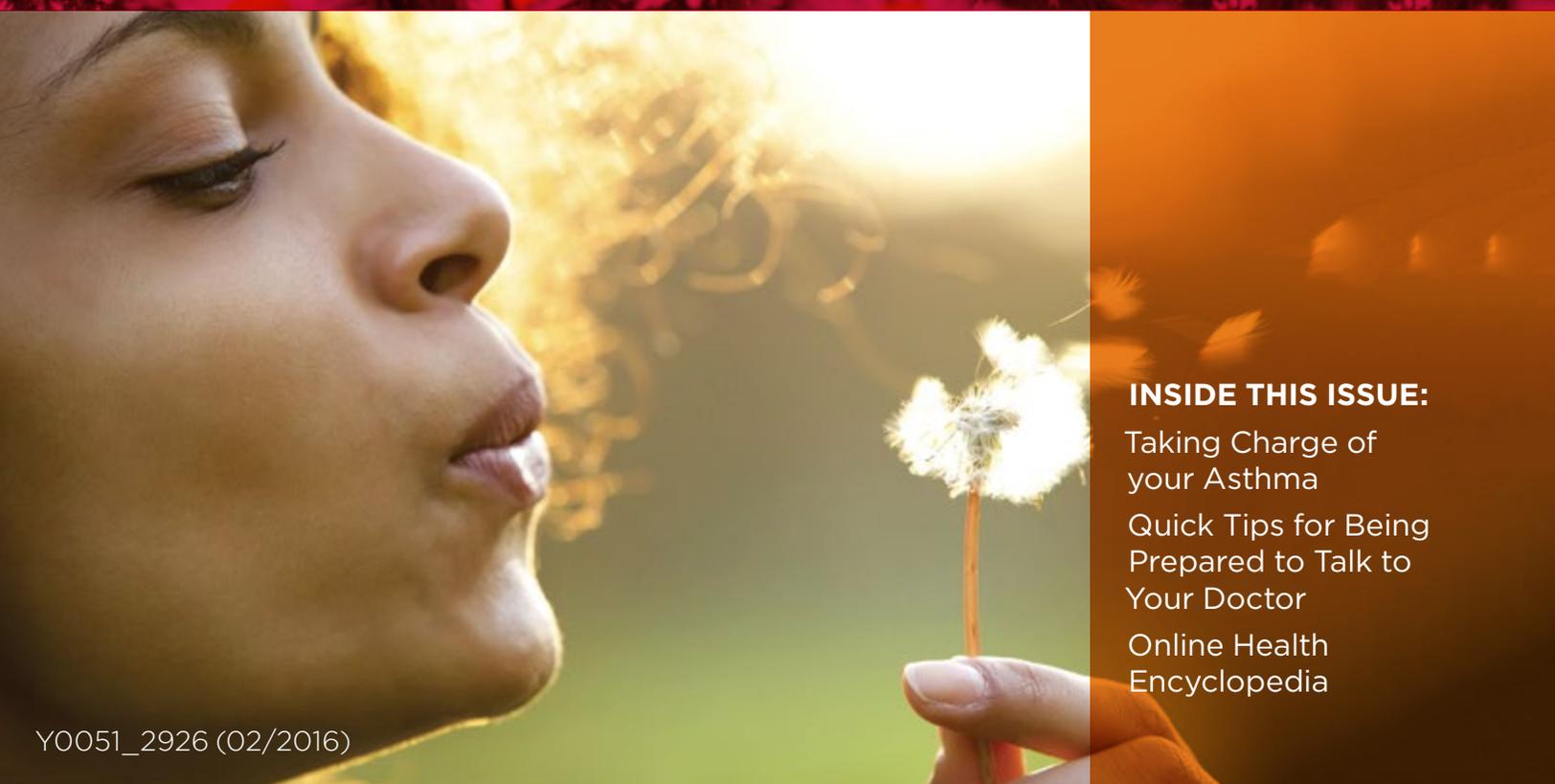




# BREATHING EASIER

A SPECIAL NEWSLETTER FOR MVP MEMBERS

ISSUE 1, 2016



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# TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR ASTHMA

During an asthma attack, the airways swell and narrow. This makes it hard to breathe. Asthma is a lifelong problem, but it does not have to limit you. If you take charge of your asthma, you can lead a full and active life.

You and your doctor will make an asthma action plan that outlines the two approaches to taking charge of asthma:

- **Controlling asthma over the long term.** Daily controller medicine helps reduce the swelling of your airways and prevent attacks.
- **Treating attacks when they occur.** The action plan will outline the steps to take and medicine to use to treat asthma attacks.

Using the asthma action plan also helps you keep track of your asthma and know how well your treatment is working.

If you or your child has been recently diagnosed, it may seem like there is a lot to remember. But the things you need to do to take charge of your asthma are really quite simple. With some practice, they will become part of your normal routine.

## HOW TO TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR ASTHMA

### Follow Your Asthma Action Plan

Take your daily medicines as prescribed. This can keep asthma under control and help you avoid asthma attacks.

- Keep your treatment goals in mind. This may help you stay on your treatment.
- Review your list of triggers. Avoiding triggers can help reduce the chance that you will have an asthma attack.

### Know Your Asthma Zones

An action plan is based on zones that are defined by your symptoms, your peak flow, or both. There are three zones: green, yellow, and red. Your action plan tells you what to do when you are in each zone.

Check your symptoms or your peak flow, or both, on a regular basis, and use your action plan to see what zone you are in. If you have yellow zone symptoms or if your peak flow drops below 80 percent of your personal best

measurement, follow your action plan. To figure out what 80 percent of your personal best measurement is, multiply your personal best measurement by 0.80. For example, if your personal best peak flow is 400, then 80 percent of that is 400 times 0.80, which is 320. To figure what 50 percent of your personal best peak flow is, multiply your personal best measurement by 0.50.

**Green means Go.** You are in the green zone if your peak flow is 80 percent to 100 percent of your personal best measurement. This is where you want to be. Keep taking your daily asthma medicines as prescribed.

**Yellow means Caution.** You are in the yellow zone if your peak flow is 50 percent to 79 percent of your personal best measurement. You may not have any symptoms, but your lung function is reduced. When symptoms are present, you may cough, wheeze, or feel short of breath. Or your asthma may limit your activities or wake you up at night.

You should take action. Your action plan will tell you what medicines you need to take, how much to take, and when to take them. If you keep going into the yellow zone from the green zone, talk with your doctor. You may need a different medicine or the dose of your medicine may need to be increased.

**Red means DANGER.** You are in the red zone if your peak flow is less than 50 percent of your personal best measurement. You may be very short of breath. Or the quick-relief medicines may not have worked. **This is dangerous.**

Take the actions listed in your action plan. You may need to go to the emergency room or be admitted to the hospital.

## Use Your Asthma Diary

- If you have an attack, write down what caused it (if you know), the symptoms, and what medicine you took.
- If you use a peak flow meter, write down your peak flow readings in your asthma diary.

## Check Your Peak Flow If Your Doctor Recommends It

- Use your peak flow meter. This is a good way to check how well your lungs are working, which is called lung function. Your lung function can get worse without causing symptoms.
- Check your peak flow as often as your doctor tells you to. For many people this is twice a day, morning, and evening.
- If you have trouble using your meter, talk with your doctor.

## See Your Doctor to Review Your Plan

Keep your regular follow-up appointments. During checkups, your doctor will ask if your symptoms or your peak flow, or both, have held steady, improved, or gotten worse. He or

she will also ask if you have asthma symptoms during exercise or at night. This information can help your doctor know if your asthma category has changed or if you need to change medicines or doses.

### When you go to your doctor:

- Take your asthma action plan and your asthma diary, if you have one. Get answers to any questions you may have about your asthma plans or your symptoms. Let your doctor know if treatment is not controlling your asthma symptoms.
- Take your peak flow meter and medicines so your doctor can review your treatment and the way you use the meter and medicines.
- Make sure you know how and when to call your doctor or go to the hospital.
- Tell your doctor if you are having trouble following your action plan.

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## QUICK TIPS FOR BEING PREPARED TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

Patients who have good relationships with their doctors are more satisfied with their care and have better results. Here are some tips to help you and your doctor become better partners in improving your health care:

- Write down your questions before your visit. List the most important ones first to make sure they get asked and answered.
- Bring a “health history” list with you, and keep it up to date.

- Always bring any medications you are taking, including over-the-counter, or a list of those medications (include when and how often you take them) and what strength.
- You might want to bring someone along to help you ask questions and remember the answers.
- Find more information and printable forms at **[www.mvphealthcare.com](http://www.mvphealthcare.com)**.

*Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)*

MVP Health Care offers a condition health management program for members living with asthma. For more information or to see if you qualify, call **1-866-942-7966**. MVP's program is based on a collaborative guideline (including the NYSDOH, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, professional organizations, MVP and other health plans from across the state) derived from the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Third Expert Report Clinical Guideline for the Diagnosis, Evaluation, and Management of Adults and Children with Asthma.

Information in this newsletter does not constitute medical advice. If you have questions about your health, talk to your doctor.

Health benefit plans are issued or administered by MVP Health Plan, Inc.; MVP Health Insurance Company; MVP Health Insurance Company of New Hampshire, Inc.; MVP Select Care, Inc.; and MVP Health Services Corp., operating subsidiaries of MVP Health Care, Inc. Not all plans available in all states and counties.

## Contact Us

For more information, call **1-866-942-7966**

Monday–Friday, 8:30 am–5:00 pm

TTY: **1-800-662-1220**

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