



**INSIDE:**  
Your asthma  
action plan



# Lifestyles for adults with **Asthma**

## A healthy diet may help control asthma

If you're overweight, shedding some pounds can have many health benefits. It reduces your risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, gallstones and certain cancers. Plus, a study in *Respirology* journal found it might make your asthma easier to control.

That same study cited further research that shows being overweight or obese may contribute to asthma. When people have both asthma and a weight problem, their asthma symptoms may feel worse. Losing weight may reduce these symptoms.

### Choose healthy foods

You've probably heard that "you are what you eat." There's a lot of truth to that saying. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a balanced diet based on nutritious foods helps

your body perform at its best. It also helps you manage your weight. Keep these general guidelines in mind:

### Emphasize these foods:

- > Fruits and vegetables
- > Whole-grain foods, such as whole-wheat bread, whole-grain cereal, brown rice and oatmeal
- > Fat-free or low-fat dairy products, such as low-fat milk and fat-free yogurt

### Also include these foods:

- > Healthy protein foods, such as fish, skinless poultry, lean meats and dried beans and peas

### Limit your intake of:

- > Saturated fats
- > Trans fats
- > Cholesterol
- > Salt (sodium)
- > Added sugars



## NOURISH YOUR BODY

Maintaining a healthy diet can keep you feeling your best for years to come. Our online program, Nourish<sup>®</sup>, can help keep you on the right track. To get started:

- > Go to **bcbsm.com**
- > Log in as a member
- > Click on the *Health & Wellness* tab
- > Click on *BlueHealthConnection*<sup>®</sup>
- > Click on *My Digital Health Coaching*
- > Click *Nourish*



## Emotions matter with asthma

There are many reasons to take control of your emotional health. But according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, perhaps the most important is that feeling down may lead to worse asthma symptoms.

The first step toward better emotional health is figuring out what causes your stress and worries. The NHLBI suggests keeping a stress diary. For a few days, write down when you get stressed out. Most of the time you probably know why this happens, but sometimes it isn't so obvious. Try to notice physical clues of your stress.

### Take time for yourself

Your body needs relaxation to reduce stress. Try to plan for 20 minutes of relaxing every day. This time is just for you. No cooking, planning family visits, talking on the phone or worrying about gifts.

Learning how to relax is important for your general well-being. But stressors may still happen and cause tension and worry. Below are some positive ways to deal with stress.

#### > **Keep away from stressors when you can.**

Sometimes planning ahead can help you do this. A to-do list, big or small, can keep you organized and help you prioritize certain daily or weekly responsibilities. Try not to let down-the-road tasks cause stress.

#### > **Change how you deal with stressors.** If thoughts of money are worrying you, try some light exercises or talk to a friend or family member to help put your mind at ease.

#### > **Get used to certain stressors.** Try to learn to accept those that you can't change. If uncontrollable stressors are part of your everyday life, then find new ways to feel better every day. For example, you can exercise more, eat healthier, explore new hobbies and spend more time with family.

**EVERY YEAR**, ask your doctor about these wellness checks. You may need some of them more than once a year.

- ✓ Update your action plan
- ✓ Review your quick-relief and long-term control medication

- ✓ Take a pulmonary function test
- ✓ Flu shot
- ✓ Pneumonia shot

If you use tobacco, ask your doctor about options to help you quit. You can also call our program, Quit the Nic, at 1-800-811-1764. Hours of QTN are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday.



### REACH OUT

Who knows more about living with asthma than those facing the same day-to-day issues as you? We'd love to hear from you. Share your feedback to help us improve and inspire other members with asthma. Just email us at [bcnccm@bcbsm.com](mailto:bcnccm@bcbsm.com) with the feedback you'd like to share with others.



## Work hard, breathe easy: Controlling asthma on the job

Workplaces can pose a special threat to people with asthma. They may harbor a host of triggers for attacks, from chemical fumes to cold air.

In addition to sometimes causing people to develop asthma, job-related conditions may also make asthma worse in people who already have the disease. The most serious problems generally involve inhaling chemical fumes, gases and airborne particles. But secondhand smoke, copier fumes, cleaning solutions or even your colleague's perfume

can cause an attack. You also can experience asthma symptoms if your job requires you to be outside in the winter, since breathing cold air can aggravate asthma.

### Taming workplace woes

Be sure your doctor knows about any conditions at work that cause attacks. Use long-term control medicines prescribed by your doctor. Get regular checkups, and let your doctor know if your asthma is flaring up.

To reduce risk at work, avoid or limit exposure to anything that tends to

aggravate your asthma. If you're experiencing attacks on the job, try to track down the cause. Evaluate if it's something you or your supervisor can control, and then take the appropriate measures. For example, if you're working outside, use a scarf or ski mask to cover your mouth and warm the air you're breathing in.

If necessary, ask your employer for help in changing the environment. Additional ventilation or special protection devices such as respirators or masks can help reduce the problem.



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### CONNECT TO A NURSE

Want to talk to a BCN chronic condition management nurse? Now you can connect online by using our nurse callback form found at [bcbsm.com/bcncmreferral](http://bcbsm.com/bcncmreferral).

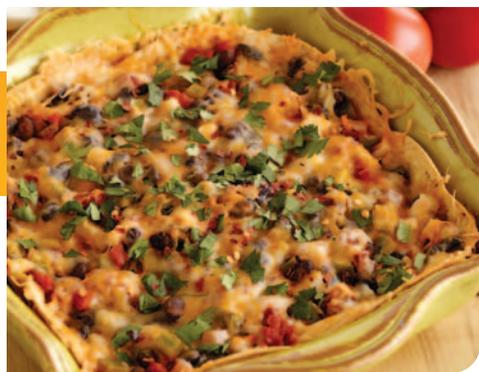


### HEALTH AND WELLNESS OR PREVENTION INFORMATION

If you have questions about this program, have received this information in error, would prefer not to receive further information or want to inquire about resources for members with special needs, please call: **1-800-392-4247** | TTY callers dial 711 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday For Customer Service, please call the number listed on the back of your Blues ID card.

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## HEALTHY LIVING



## GOOD EATING

### **Black Bean Tortilla Casserole** (Servings: 4)

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup frozen chopped bell pepper, thawed and drained
- 1 cup frozen chopped onion, thawed and drained
- 1 can (15 to 16 ounces) no-salt-added black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (14½ ounces) no-salt-added diced tomatoes, undrained
- ½ cup salsa or picante sauce
- 8 6-inch corn tortillas

- 1 cup shredded light Mexican mixed cheese blend or Monterey Jack cheese
- ⅛ teaspoon (heaping) crushed red pepper flakes
- ¼ cup snipped fresh cilantro
- Vegetable oil spray

#### DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. In a large bowl, stir together the bell pepper, onion, beans, undrained tomatoes and salsa.

Spray a 9-inch square pan with vegetable oil spray. Spoon 1 cup

bell pepper mixture into the pan. Arrange four tortillas in the pan, overlapping as necessary. Spoon half the remaining sauce over the tortillas. Top with ½ cup cheese. Repeat.

Lightly spray a sheet of aluminum foil with vegetable oil spray. Cover the pan with foil, lightly sprayed side down to prevent the cheese from sticking.

Bake for 30 minutes. Remove the foil. Bake for five minutes more, or until hot and bubbly. Sprinkle with red pepper flakes and cilantro. Cut into four squares.

**NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION:** 360 calories; 9 g fat; 55 g carbohydrates; 17 g protein; 20 mg cholesterol; 550 mg sodium; 11 g fiber.

# My asthma action plan

The colors of the traffic light will help you use your asthma medicines. Take this form to your doctor to fill out. Then make a copy for yourself and a copy to keep at your workplace or with a caretaker.

Name	Date
Doctor	Doctor's phone
Hospital/emergency room phone	
Emergency contact	Phone

## GREEN ZONE means GO.

You have ALL of these:

- > Breathing is good
- > No cough or wheeze
- > Sleep through the night
- > Can work or participate in physical activities
- > Peak flow above:

### Use these medicines every day.

Medicine	How much to take	When to take it

### For asthma with exercise, take:

## YELLOW ZONE means CAUTION.

You have ANY of these symptoms:

- > First sign of a cold
- > Exposure to known trigger
- > Cough
- > Mild wheeze
- > Tight chest
- > Coughing at night
- > Peak flow from:  to

### Continue with GREEN ZONE medicine and ADD:

Medicine	How much to take	When to take it
<b>First &gt;</b>		
<b>Next &gt;</b>		

If a quick-relief or **YELLOW ZONE** medicine is needed more than two to three times a week, call your doctor.

## RED ZONE means DANGER!

Your asthma is getting worse fast:

- > Medicine is not helping within 15 to 20 minutes
- > Breathing is hard and fast
- > Nose opens wide
- > Ribs show
- > Lips and/or fingernails are blue
- > Trouble walking and talking
- > Peak flow below:

### Take these medicines and call your doctor.

Medicine	How much to take	When to take it

Get help from a doctor now. Your doctor will want to see you right away. **It's important.** If you can't contact your doctor, go directly to the emergency room. **DON'T WAIT.** Make an appointment with your primary care physician within two days of an ER visit or hospitalization.

# My asthma action plan

## Recognizing your triggers

When you have asthma, it's important to know what can trigger symptoms. Then you can find ways to control your environment to minimize or eliminate triggers. Common triggers include:



**Allergens:** Substances such as pollens, molds and animal dander can trigger asthma.



**Irritants:** Inflamed airways are sensitive to environmental irritants, including:

- > Air pollutants, such as tobacco smoke, wood smoke and chemicals in the air
- > Strong smells or sprays, such as perfumes, household cleaners or cooking fumes
- > Changing weather, such as changes in temperature and humidity



**Infections:** Colds, flu and pneumonia can trigger or aggravate asthma.



**Exercise:** Physical exercise can trigger attacks in certain circumstances.



**Medicines:** Certain medicines, including aspirin, ibuprofen and beta-blockers, can cause or trigger asthma attacks in some people.



**Food:** Some foods or food additives can trigger symptoms. Foods to be careful with include dried fruit, processed potatoes, peanuts and shrimp.

If you don't know your triggers, try to limit your exposure to one possible trigger at a time. Watch to see if you get better. This may show you if the trigger is a problem for you.



## Asthma trigger checklist

Check all items that trigger your asthma and could make your symptoms worse. Talk with your doctor about how to best manage these triggers.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chalk                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Pets — animal dander      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cigarette smoke and secondhand smoke | <input type="checkbox"/> Pollen                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colds or flu                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor air quality          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dust mites                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong odors, perfumes    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Sudden temperature change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mold                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood smoke                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pests — cockroaches                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Foods: _____              |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____              |