



May News

Has the spring left you breathless?

What is asthma?

Asthma is defined as a chronic inflammatory disease of the airway that causes shortness of breath, tightness in the chest, coughing, and wheezing. Currently there is no cure for asthma. However there are many strategies that can be implemented to live symptom free.

Who is affected by asthma?

Anyone can develop asthma, although it is usually diagnosed in young people (3 years of age). Currently approximately 3 million Canadians have asthma.

How do I know if I have asthma?

If you are experiencing symptoms of asthma (wheezing, trouble breathing, persistent cough or recurrent “chest” infections) then you should speak to your doctor. They will be able to diagnose asthma and rule out other conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pneumonia, and heart disease.

Risk factors for asthma:

- Close relative with allergies/asthma.
- Wheezing without a cold
- Allergic rhinitis (inflammation in the nose)
- Eczema

What causes asthma symptoms?

People with asthma experience trouble breathing when they are exposed to asthma triggers. The lining of the airway becomes inflamed and may produce more

mucous. The muscles around the airway become sensitive and start to tighten, causing the airways to narrow. The more the airways narrow the more difficult it is to breathe.

What are asthma triggers?

Asthma triggers can increase inflammation in the lungs and worsen asthma symptoms.

Triggers include:

- Dust Mites
- Household pets
- Moulds
- Viral infections
- Smoke
- Cold air
- Perfumes

It is important to find out what your asthma triggers are so they can be avoided. **Speak to your pharmacist for advice on how to avoid asthma triggers.**

How is asthma treated?

Typically two different types of inhalers are used together to manage asthma.

- A “reliever” inhaler is used to rapidly open the airways and stops asthma symptoms immediately. (ie: Ventolin)
- A “controller” inhaler reduces inflammation in the airways and prevents asthma attacks from occurring. (ie: Flovent). **Controllers must be taken every day.** You will know that your controller medication is working because you will have fewer asthma symptoms over time and require the use of the “reliever” inhaler less. **Speak to your pharmacist if you are unsure how to use your inhalers.**

How do I know if my asthma is under control?

To see if your asthma is under control answer the following questionnaire.

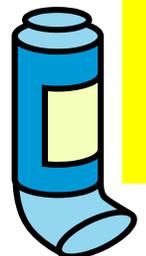
1. Do you cough, wheeze or have a tight chest because of your asthma? (4 or more days a week)
2. Does coughing, wheezing, or chest tightness wake you up at night? (1 or more times per week)
3. Do you stop exercising because of your asthma? (in the past 3 months)
4. Do you ever miss work or school because of your asthma? (in the past 3 months)
5. Do you use your blue inhaler 4 or more times per week? (except one dose per day for exercise)

If you answered “yes” to one or more questions your asthma is not under control. Ask your pharmacist about what you can do to feel better.

How do I monitor my asthma over time?

An asthma action plan helps you and your doctor to create a personalized program for managing your asthma. This plan will help you to recognize the early warning signs and increase asthma medications or seek emergency help when required. **See your pharmacist for an asthma action plan template to bring to your doctor.**

Ask your pharmacist for more information on asthma today!



Rx Center— Understanding Your Drug Plan

Your drug plan pays for a portion or all of your prescription medication, and saves you money. To get the most out of this benefit, and prevent delays at the pharmacy it is important to learn about how your drug plan works.

Who is in charge of your drug plan?

The company where you or the card holder works hires an insurance company to manage the drug plan. Alternatively if you are a senior (over 65), or on social assistance, the provincial government manages the drug plan.

To learn about the details of your plan contact your insurance company.

How do I ensure that the pharmacy will bill to my drug plan?

Show your personal drug plan card to a pharmacy staff member when you drop off your prescription. If you have a direct bill plan it will pay for your medication at the pharmacy.

If you have a reimbursement plan (instead of a direct bill plan) you will have to submit your receipts by mail so that the insurance company will pay their share. Your pharmacy will keep your drug plan information on file, so it is not necessary to show your drug plan card to your pharmacy every time you fill a prescription. However, if your plan changes you must provide the pharmacy with updated drug plan information.

How many days of my prescription can I fill at a time?

Each plan allows different amounts of medication to be filled at a time. Some plans allow 100 days while others only allow 30 days. Ask a member of the pharmacy team how many days your plan will allow.

Why are some prescriptions rejected by my drug plan?

Not all medications are covered by drug plans. Additionally, each drug

plan is different in which medications they cover. For some there may be a less expensive medication that is covered that will work as well. Your pharmacist may be able to make a recommendation to your doctor for an alternative that would be covered.

Why do I have to pay for my prescription even though I have coverage?

Some drug plans require that you pay a portion of the prescription (co-pay). Other plans require that you pay a deductible every year. For example you must pay the first \$200 of prescriptions before your coverage kicks in.

Why won't my plan pay for my compounded prescription?

We can not bill compounded medication directly (except to Alberta Blue Cross and social services). You will have to submit your receipts by mail to receive reimbursement for any compounded medications.

Supplement Spotlight— Multivitamins

What are multivitamins?

Multivitamins contain essential vitamins and minerals. They should contain the daily recommended intake of these nutrients. The daily recommended intake is the amount that is needed not only to prevent deficiency, but also to lower the risk of chronic disease. There are 13 known vitamins. They are organized into two groups: fat soluble (A,D,E,K), and water soluble (B's and C). Minerals are important because they are used in the structural formation of the bones and teeth, they maintain normal heart rhythm, and muscular contractility. **With few exceptions these essential nutrients can not be made by your body and must be obtained from food or supplements.**

Who should take multivitamins?

Multivitamins are considered safe for almost everyone. However if you are eating a well balanced diet then you may be getting enough vitamins and minerals already, and supplementation may not be necessary. People who are not eating from all of the food groups (vegetarians, fussy eaters, lactose intolerant) will benefit from supplementing.

Ask your pharmacist if a multivitamin is right for you!



Which multivitamin is right for me?

There are many different types of multivitamins available.

- Multivitamins for ages 50+: Often have higher amounts of Calcium and Vitamin D to prevent osteoporosis. Keep in mind that most multivitamins do not contain enough calcium or vitamin D, therefore additional supplementation is often required.
- Multivitamins for pregnancy: Have increased Folic acid (to prevent neural tube defects) and Iron.
- Multivitamins for children: Doses are adjusted to the daily recommended intake of children. They often supplied as chewable tablets, or gummy bears.

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