

Managing Asthma™

Summer 2022



Asthma Warning Signs

Sunshine, warmer temperatures, and blooming flowers are all signs that carefree summer days are coming. If you have asthma, however, these seasonal changes can also double as potential warning signs. Learning your triggers and managing your asthma properly will allow you to get outside and enjoy the summertime, too.

TEMPERATURE

An occasional hot day shouldn't make your asthma flare up, but there are other conditions that can make heat a potential asthma trigger. As temperatures rise, air quality often lowers. Climate scientists point to an accumulation of pollutants in the air as a potential cause for higher summer temperatures. While a breezy day might help you cool off, wind can carry particles that can aggravate your asthma. Unfortunately, high heat can also lead to wildfires which pump smoke and ash into the air.

So, if you have asthma or other respiratory conditions, it might be a good idea to stick to air conditioning and keep those windows closed.

HUMIDITY

High humidity can also make breathing more difficult for asthma patients. Humidity is the measurement of moisture trapped in the air. A high percentage can often make the air outside feel heavy or thick. Healthcare researchers studying childhood asthma report that asthma-related hospitalizations jump 10% when both air temperatures and humidity levels go up.

There's not much anyone can do to change the humidity, but people with asthma should try and plan their days around it, if possible. For example, checking the weather report or opting to spend time outside during the early morning when there is often lower temperatures and humidity can help.

POLLEN

As beautiful as flowers are, they are pollen producers. Those tiny particles can trigger asthma symptoms, including coughing and wheezing. What's more, pollinators pose a problem. Stinging insects, such as bees, can cause allergic reactions, including asthma flareups.

To reduce pollen's impact on your breathing, change clothes as soon as you come inside, and wash exposed skin, especially before going to bed.

VIRUSES

Although it is more common to catch colds during the winter, you can still come down with one in the summer. Also, cases of COVID-19 have been known to spike during warmer months. Just as a cold-weather virus can cause a flareup, so too can summertime viruses.

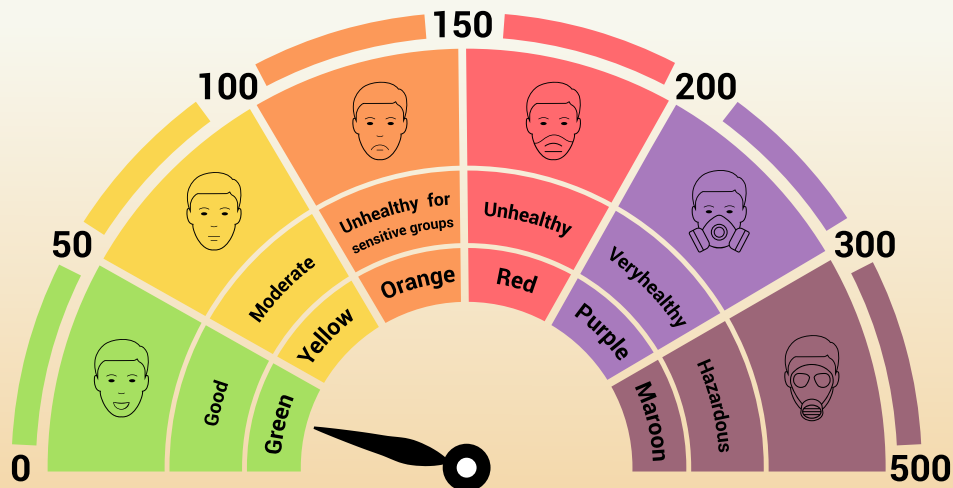
Practicing proper hand hygiene and avoiding people who are ill can help keep these triggers under control all year round. Also, it's important to maintain your asthma plan and seek treatment advice when experiencing substantial changes to your health.

By better understanding your asthma warning signs and creating a plan to deal with them, you can enjoy summer to the fullest.

References: Bettencourt, Reanna. "Heat Can Trigger Asthma Symptoms. Be Prepared as Summer Approaches." Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, 19 May 2022, <https://www.tpchd.org/Home/Components/Blog/Blog/32471/333?backlist=%2F>.

CHICAGO, IL | April 29. "3 Asthma Warning Signs to Monitor This Summer." American Lung Association, <https://www.lung.org/media/press-releases/3-asthma-warning-signs>.

Williams, Kelli W. "9 Asthma Triggers and What to Do about Them." HealthyChildren.org, <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/allergies-asthma/Pages/asthma-triggers-and-what-to-do-about-them.aspx>.



Air Quality Index for Outdoor & Indoor Environments

Have you heard of the Air Quality Index (AQI)? Established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the AQI checks for five major pollutants: ground-level ozone; particle pollution; carbon monoxide; sulfur dioxide; and nitrogen dioxide. A number value and color code are assigned based on how much of these particles are in the air, and how they can be affected by weather patterns and environmental conditions.

The numerical scale goes from zero to 500. The higher the number, the more pollutants in the air. As a general rule, an AQI reading below 100 is considered satisfactory or acceptable. The closer it gets to 100, the more dangerous it is for people with chronic conditions such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). An AQI above 150 is considered unhealthy for everyone, and anything above 200 is very unhealthy, with a mark of 300 or higher indicating hazardous conditions.

The color rating is simply a visual reference for the same system. Green signifies safe conditions, yellow is moderate, orange levels should be a sign that people with asthma or other respiratory conditions should take precautions, with red, purple, and maroon indicating poor or unhealthy breathing conditions for everyone.

To keep triggers to a minimum on days registering anything other than green or yellow, people with asthma should stay inside with windows closed and air conditioning on, if possible. Exercise indoors and make sure asthma treatments or medications are easily accessible.

However, indoor air can get polluted too. Mold, dust, tobacco use, and even smoke from cooking, or the odors and particles produced by cleaning products, can lead to an asthma incident. Older homes may also contain materials that complicate chronic respiratory conditions. If you are concerned about the Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) within your home, regularly change the heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) filters, have the ducts cleaned to remove dust buildup, and upgrade systems if financially feasible. Commercial air filters and cleaners are also available.

Unfortunately, air pollution has increased in communities across the country. The American Lung Association's State of the Air report, based on data collected between 2018 and 2020, states that more than 2 million people experienced poor AQI. Wildfires have created even more unhealthy days in the West and Rocky Mountain states than the national average. Also, communities of color are especially disadvantaged, with minority neighborhoods registering failing grades for overall air quality, a fact which can be attributed to greater traffic pollution and closer proximity to manufacturing sites.

To best manage your asthma, keep track of your local AQI. In addition to daily weather reports, you can check your area's air quality at the EPA's AirNow.gov website or app.

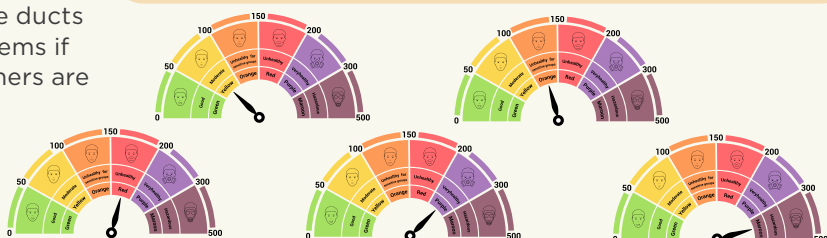
References: "Air Quality Index." American Lung Association, <https://www.lung.org/clean-air/outdoors/air-quality-index>.

Hassan, Adeel. "The Air Quality Index Explained: What It Means and How to Stay Safe." The New York Times, The New York Times, 17 June 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/air-quality-index.html>.

"Poor Air Quality and the Impact on Your Health." University of Utah Health, <https://healthcare.utah.edu/healthfeed/postings/2021/07/air-quality-health.php>.

Radcliffe, Shawn. "Air Pollution Can Cause Heart Attacks, Stroke and Asthma Attacks: Why Is It Getting Worse in Us?" Healthline, Healthline Media, 21 Apr. 2022, <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/air-pollution-can-cause-heart-attacks-stroke-and-asthma-attacks-why-is-it-getting-worse-in-us#Raising-awareness-of-the-dangers-of-air-pollution> <https://www.edf.org/blog/2021/08/03/air-we-breathe-harming-us-heres-what-we-can-do-about-it>.

"Understanding the Sources and Causes of Utah's Air Pollution." Utah Department of Environmental Quality, 14 Feb. 2022, <https://deq.utah.gov/communication/news/understanding-utahs-air-quality>.



Managing Asthma Community Resources

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) estimates 20 million adult Americans, and another 5.1 million children, live with asthma. For patients and their families, dealing with asthma means minimizing triggers and knowing when and how to administer medications to breathe easier. It can be a lot to manage. Asthma can also create social and emotional difficulties stemming from the constant need to manage symptoms while performing daily tasks. Fortunately, you are not on your own.

Individuals with asthma can build a support network to help them live healthy lives. Your medical team can provide helpful insight and leadership in managing your asthma. Doctors and nurses can develop personalized treatment plans, including medications, to address your specific needs. They can also suggest any necessary lifestyle changes to prevent flareups, such as smoking cessation or breathing exercises.

For parents of children with asthma, school nurses can be a great resource to help your kids cope with their condition while on campus. These healthcare professionals are knowledgeable about asthma symptoms and treatments so they can step in immediately if a child experiences a flareup while at school.

Public health departments are also staffed with medical personnel who understand asthma and know the effects of community and environmental conditions on patients.

Sometimes the best people to turn to are those who share the same experiences as you. Online communities of asthma patients, their families, and caregivers, have popped up all over. These forums offer members opportunities to exchange resources, comment on treatment responses, validate one another's experiences. Examples include communities sponsored by the American Lung Association, the AAFA, and the AsthmaCommunityNetwork.org, which are moderated to make sure the information posted is as accurate as possible. Additionally, the EPA's asthma website houses various resources and links to programs for patients and parents.

As the saying goes, knowledge is power, so empower yourself with an asthma support network that includes a variety of resources and experts.

References: "Where in My Community Can I Get Help for Managing Asthma?" EPA, Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.epa.gov/asthma/where-my-community-can-i-get-help-managing-asthma>.

1. Part of helping you live the healthiest life possible is protecting you from sickness and disease when possible. The COVID-19 vaccine is covered 100% on all SelectHealth® plans. Please **visit selecthealth.org/who-we-are/covid-19-coverage** if you have any questions about COVID-19 coverage information.



The content presented here is for your information only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, and it should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your doctor if you have any questions or concerns. The information that is contained in this newsletter does not guarantee benefits. Member discounts are not considered a plan benefit. If you have questions or want to confirm your benefits, call Member Services at **800-538-5038**.

If you have a Medicare Advantage® plan, call us toll-free at **855-442-9900**, weekdays 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., closed Sunday. Outside of these hours of operation, please leave a message and your call will be returned within one business day. TTY users, please call 711.

SelectHealth obeys federal civil rights laws. We do not treat you differently because of your race, color, ethnic background or where you come from, age, disability, sex, religion, creed, language, social class, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and/or veteran status.

This information is available for free in other languages and alternate formats.

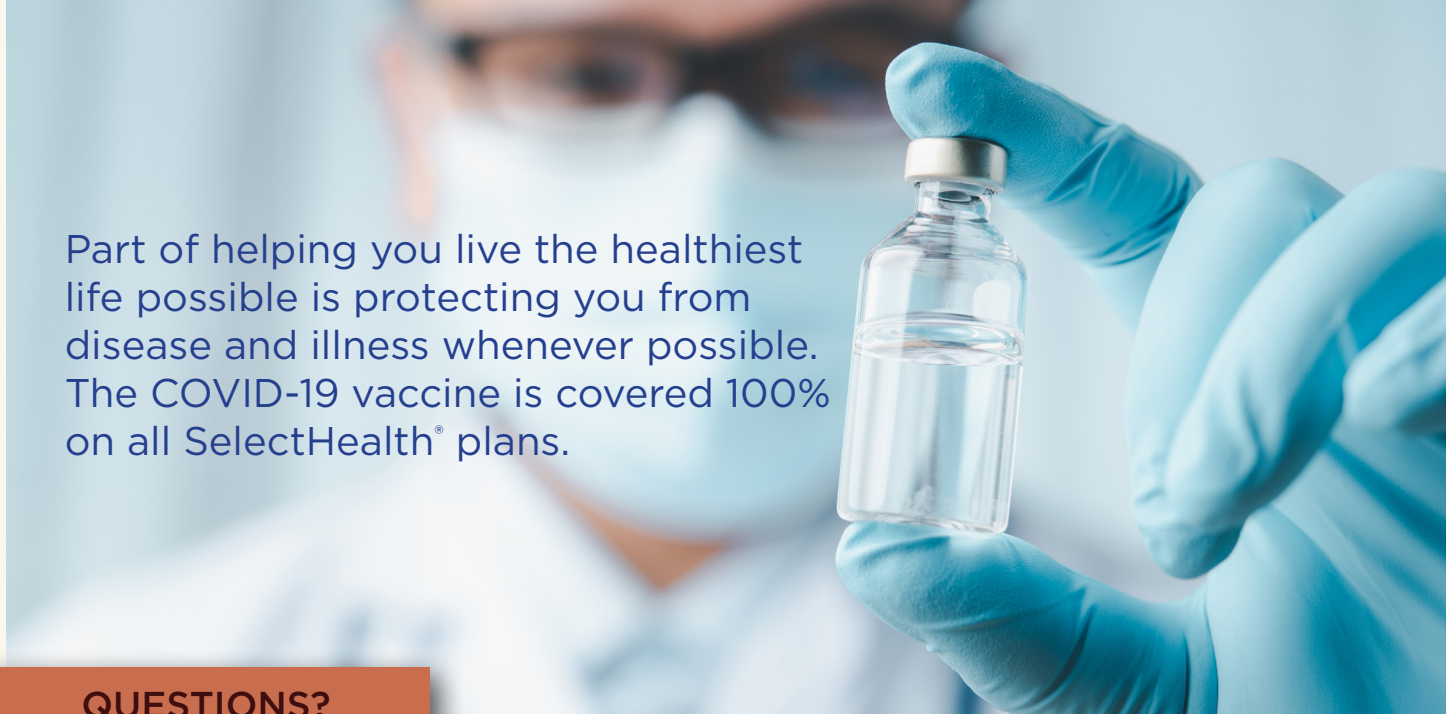
ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística.

注意：如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電

SelectHealth Advantage: **855-442-9900** (TTY: 711) / SelectHealth: **800-538-5038**

© 2022 SelectHealth. All rights reserved.
2085084 06/22 H1994_2085084_C

Si desea leer este boletín en español, visite selecthealth.org/wellness/newsletters.



Part of helping you live the healthiest life possible is protecting you from disease and illness whenever possible. The COVID-19 vaccine is covered 100% on all SelectHealth® plans.

QUESTIONS?

Please visit selecthealth.org/who-we-are/covid-19-coverage or call Member Services at 800-538-5038 if you have any questions regarding COVID-19 coverage information.