

HELP US HELP YOU

across Suffolk
and north east Essex

NHS

**Suffolk and
North East Essex**



Taking care with asthma

When you have a long-term condition, it's important to take care of yourself and follow the advice of your clinicians so you can prevent your condition from worsening or getting complications. This guide will help you to know what you should be doing, and what to do if you start feeling worse. Our aim is to ensure that you get the care you need, when you need it. We want you to be able to look after yourself and know your warning signs, so that you don't end up in an emergency situation.

Things you can do to help yourself



If you have asthma, things you can do to help include:

- using your preventer inhaler or tablets every day – this can help keep your symptoms under control and prevent asthma attacks
 - checking before taking other medicines – always check the packet to see if a medicine is suitable for someone with asthma, and ask a pharmacist, doctor or nurse if you're not sure
 - not smoking – stopping smoking can significantly reduce the severity and frequency of asthma symptoms
 - exercising regularly – exercise should not trigger your symptoms once you're on appropriate treatment; Asthma + Lung UK has advice about keeping active with asthma
 - eating healthily – most people with asthma can have a normal diet
 - getting vaccinated – it's a good idea to be up to date on any vaccinations you are eligible for such as the COVID-19 vaccination, the annual flu jab and the one-off pneumococcal vaccination.
- using your inhaler correctly – [Asthma + Lung UK has information about using your inhaler](#), and you can ask a nurse or GP practice for advice if you're still not sure. There is also an App which raises awareness about correct techniques of using an inhaler - [MySpira | Augmented Reality Asthma Training App](#)

Cold weather



Cold weather is a common trigger for asthma symptoms. There are things you can do to help control your symptoms in the cold:

- carry your reliever inhaler with you at all times and keep taking your regular preventer inhaler as prescribed
- if you need to use your inhaler more than usual, speak to your doctor about reviewing your treatment
- keep warm and dry – wear gloves, a scarf and a hat, and try to heat rooms you spend a lot of time in, such as the living room or bedroom, to at least 18°C. There is information on Essex County Council and Suffolk County Council websites for advice about ways to make homes cheaper to heat.
- wrap a scarf loosely over your nose and mouth – this will help warm up the air before you breathe it
- try breathing in through your nose instead of your mouth – your nose warms the air as you breathe

Treatment



While there is currently no cure for asthma, there are a number of treatments that can help control the condition. Most asthma treatments are taken using an inhaler, a small device that delivers a spray or powder medicine to your lungs as you breathe in.



The main treatments are:

- identifying and avoiding asthma triggers if possible
- reliever inhalers – inhalers used when needed to quickly relieve asthma symptoms for a short time
- preventer inhalers – inhalers used regularly every day to reduce the inflammation in the breathing tubes, which prevents asthma symptoms occurring

You'll usually draw up a personal action plan with your doctor or asthma nurse. This will include information about your medicines, how to monitor your condition and what to do if you have an asthma attack.

If you do not have an action plan, please review your GP record online or ask your asthma team at your next review.

When to get medical advice



Please make sure you are familiar with your action plan and understand what it means for you. If you feel that your asthma is getting worse, as well as referring to your action plan, you should follow the instructions outlined on the plan.

Only attend A&E if you are having significant difficulty breathing and your reliever inhalers are not working.

Please make sure you have adequate supplies of medication and monitor weather forecasts at regular intervals. If there are instances of bad weather, please arrange for a relative or a friend to collect your medication on your behalf.

Remember you can access healthcare services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If there is an urgent need, you can obtain medical advice by visiting 111 online - www.111.nhs.uk - or phoning NHS 111.