

## **SUMMARY OF STEPS**

### *Managing an asthma episode*

- ◆ **Know your warning signs** and peak flow zones so you can begin treatment early.
  - ◆ **Take the correct amount of medicine** at times the doctor has prescribed. If your asthma control plan includes increased dosage or a second medicine to be used during episodes, take it as prescribed. **Always call your doctor before taking more medicine than the doctor ordered.**
  - ◆ **Remove yourself or the child from the trigger** if you know what it is. Treatment does not work as effectively if the person affected stays around the trigger.
  - ◆ **Keep calm and relaxed.** Family members must stay calm and relaxed, too.
  - ◆ **Rest and sip some warm water while waiting for medications to work.**
  - ◆ **Observe yourself or the affected person** by noting changes in body signs such as wheezing, coughing, trouble breathing, and posture. If you have a peak flow meter, measure peak flow number before at treatment of quick-relief medicine and 20-30 minutes after each treatment to see if peak flow measurement is improving.
  - ◆ **Review the list below for signs to seek emergency medical care for asthma.** They include:
    1. **Your wheeze, cough, or shortness of breath gets worse, even after the medicine has been given and had time to work.** Most inhaled bronchodilator medicines produce an effect within 5 to 10 minutes. Discuss the time your medicines take to work with your doctor.
    2. **Peak Flow readings going down, or unimproved after treatment with bronchodilators,** or anytime the personal best peak flow readings drop to 60 percent or lower. Discuss this personal best peak flow level with your doctor.
    3. **Your breathing or the affected person's breathing gets difficult.** Signs of breathing difficulty include:
      - Chest and neck muscles that are pulled or sucked in with each breath, flaring nostrils
      - The affected person is hunching over.
      - The affected person is struggling to breathe.
      - **The affected person has trouble walking or talking.**
      - **The affected person stops moving/playing and cannot start again.**
      - **The affected person's lips or fingernails are grey or blue.**
- If the any of the last three signs are observed, get help NOW!***
- ◆ **Keep your important information** for getting emergency help handy.
  - ◆ **Call your parent,** or other nearby adult to help you when signs of an uncontrolled asthma begin. Do not do the following:
    - Do not drink a lot of water, just drink normal amounts.
    - Do not breathe warm moist air from a shower.
    - Do not re-breathe into a paper bag held over the nose.
    - Do not use over-the-counter cold remedies without first calling your provider.
  - ◆ **See “Management of Asthma Exacerbations: Home Treatment”,** G-19 of Missouri School Asthma Manual.

*Source: National Asthma Education Program.*

*National Heart, Lung, & Blood Institute (1992), reviewed by Asthma Ready® Communities Staff (2010).*