

# Asthma Control

Winter 2003



## Getting Ready for WINTER

### Asthma Checklist

You are more at risk for an asthma attack in the winter months. Here is a checklist of things you can do to be prepared:

- ◆ Get your flu shot.
- ◆ Wash your hands often.
- ◆ Eat a healthy diet.
- ◆ Clean and replace filters in your furnace before starting it for the season. Clean and change filters each month the heating system is active.
- ◆ Set home humidity at less than 40 to discourage dust mites.
- ◆ Clean fireplace chimney. Fireplaces can create dangerous smoke.
- ◆ Wear a scarf across your face in cold weather.
- ◆ Continue following your asthma action plan and taking medications.
- ◆ Consult your physician before using over-the-counter cold medicines. Some medicines such as aspirin, which is found in many over-the-counter cold medicines, may trigger asthma symptoms.

### Wintertime Tips

Cold air can cause an asthma attack. Protect your lungs when you go outside by covering your mouth and nose with a scarf.



Make breathing easier indoors by changing the air filter in your furnace according to the manufacturer's recommendation.



# Smoking: *The Five Keys to Quitting*



If you have ever tried to quit smoking, you know how hard it can be. But it's important for your health, especially if you have asthma. Second-hand smoke is also dangerous to those around you, which is another reason for you to quit as soon as possible.

## 1 Get Ready

- Set a quit date.
- Change your environment. Get rid of all cigarettes and ashtrays in your home, car, and workplace. Don't allow smoking in your home.
- Review your past attempts to quit. Think about what worked and what did not.
- Once you quit, don't smoke, not one puff.

## 2 Get Support and Encouragement

Studies have shown that you have a better chance of being successful if you have help. You can get support in many ways:

- Tell your family, friends, and co-workers that you are going to quit and want their support. Ask them not to smoke around you or leave cigarettes out.
- Talk to your health care provider.
- Get individual, group, or telephone counseling. The more counseling you have, the better your chances are of quitting. Programs are given at local hospitals and health centers. For a list of local programs, log on to [www.carefirst.com](http://www.carefirst.com) and click on *My Care First*. Then click on Health Education Classes, Support Groups and Events. You can also take part in Freedom from Smoking Online sponsored by the American Lung Association by logging onto [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org).

## Kids' Corner



## Know Your Triggers

Triggers are the things that cause your asthma attacks. Some common triggers are dust mites, pollen, roach droppings, animal dander, air pollution, tobacco smoke, mold and strong odors from things like perfume or spray cans. You should stay away from your triggers to prevent asthma attacks.

Circle the triggers in this picture.

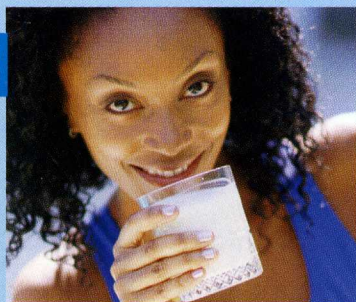
You can color the picture when you are done.







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## Learn New Skills and Behaviors

Try to distract yourself from urges to smoke. Talk to someone, go for a walk, or get busy with a task, chew gum, drink a glass of water.

- When you first try to quit, change your routine. Use a different route to work. Drink tea instead of coffee. Eat breakfast in a different place.
- Do something to reduce your stress. Take a hot bath, exercise, or read a book.
- Plan something enjoyable to do every day.
- Drink a lot of water and other fluids.

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## Get Medication and Use It Correctly

Medications can help you stop smoking and lessen the urge to smoke. Everyone who is trying to quit may benefit from using a medication. If you are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, nursing, under age 18, smoking fewer than 10 cigarettes per day, or have a medical condition, talk to your doctor or other health care provider before taking medications.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved five medications to help you quit smoking:

1. **Bupropion SR** – available by prescription.
2. **Nicotine gum** – available over-the-counter.
3. **Nicotine inhaler** – available by prescription.
4. **Nicotine nasal spray** – available by prescription.
5. **Nicotine patch** – available by prescription and over-the-counter.

Your doctor can help you decide which option is best for you.

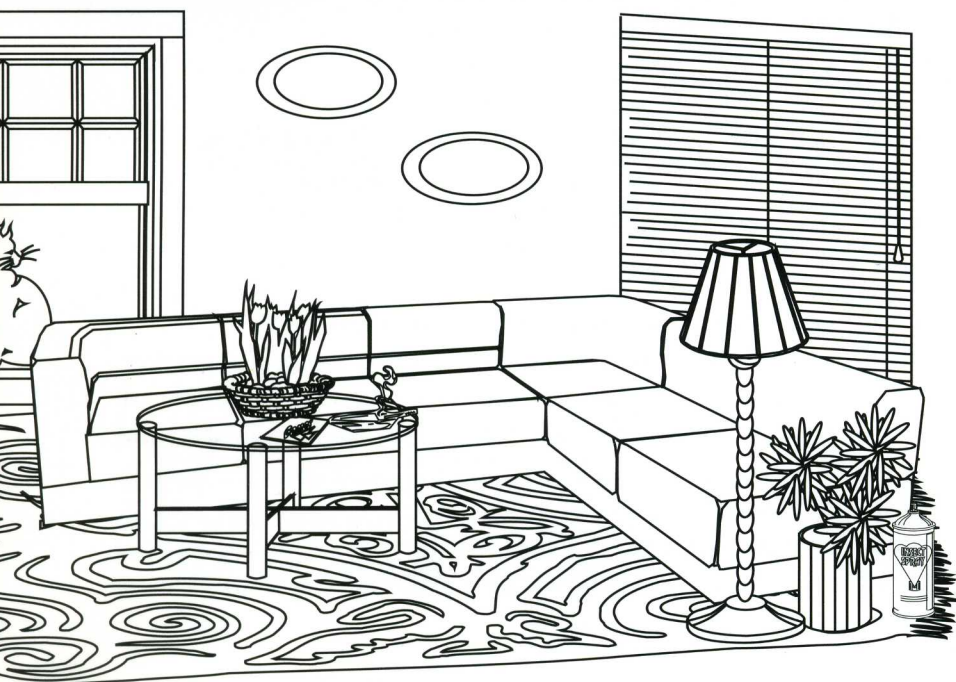
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## Be Prepared for Relapse or Difficult Situations

Most relapses occur within the first 3 months of quitting. Don't be discouraged if you start smoking again. Remember, most people try several times before they finally quit. Here are some difficult situations to watch for:

- **Alcohol.** Avoid drinking alcohol.
- **Other Smokers.** Being around smoking can make you want to smoke.
- **Weight Gain.** Many smokers will gain weight when they quit, usually less than 10 pounds. Eat a healthy diet and stay active. Don't let weight gain distract you from your goal of quitting smoking. Some quit-smoking medications may help delay weight gain.
- **Bad Mood or Depression.** There are a lot of ways to improve your mood other than smoking.

If you are having problems with any of these situations, talk to your doctor.



## Case Management

Have you heard about our case management services? A case manager will work with you and your physician to coordinate your doctor's plan of care. If you are interested in our case management services, please call 410-605-2623 or 888-264-8648.

For more help with asthma management, log on to [www.carefirst.com](http://www.carefirst.com) and click on My Care First.





# When the **BLUES** *Won't Go Away*

The holiday season is not always a happy time, especially if you have a chronic condition like asthma. If you have any of these symptoms for more than 2 weeks, you could have depression:

- ◆ Feeling a constant sense of sadness
- ◆ No longer enjoying things like you did before
- ◆ Constant fatigue
- ◆ Poor sleep or too much sleep
- ◆ Increase or decrease in appetite
- ◆ Anxious or irritable mood
- ◆ Feeling that life isn't worth living
- ◆ Trouble paying attention

Talk with your doctor if you think you may be depressed and start enjoying life again.



Reminder: It's not too late to get a flu shot. If you haven't had a flu shot yet, make an appointment as soon as possible.

*Visit us on the web at [www.carefirst.com](http://www.carefirst.com)*

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Click on *My Care First* to learn more about managing your health.

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