

5 things asthma sufferers can do to keep lungs healthy amid coronavirus

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Children with asthma use inhalers to relieve some of their symptoms, which include coughing, wheezing, chest tightness and shortness of breath. Credit: Tradimus / Wikimedia commons / [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

As the coronavirus pandemic continues, it potentially poses a particular issue for asthma sufferers.

People with the chronic disease have narrowed and swollen airways that produce extra mucus. Asthma sufferers are among those who are at higher risk of contracting the novel virus, which causes the disease COVID-19.

The American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology reported that 26.5 million Americans have the condition and of the more than 3,500 people who die of [asthma](#) each year, almost half are 65-years-old or older.

Here are five steps CNN reported people with the [lung disease](#) can take to prevent an [asthma attack](#), which is when airways become inflamed and swollen, often leading to difficulty breathing.

Be familiar with your triggers

The Mayo Clinic reported that asthma triggers can vary from person to person, and they can include cold air, stress, airborne substances like pollen and pet dander and air pollutants. Beer, dried fruit and shrimp could also be a trigger due to the sulfites and preservatives added to them.

"I would hope every asthmatic would get a good understanding of the things that are more likely to bring on their asthma and try to avoid those," pulmonologist Dr. Albert Rizzo, chief medical officer for the American Lung Association, told CNN.

Record what's happening

Symptoms of asthma include coughing and wheezing as well as chest pain and tightness. Experts say asthma sufferers should keep track of such things, including using peak flow meters to measure breath strength.

"They should assess how often they're reaching for their rescue medications. They should assess how often they're waking up at night with a cough or a wheeze. These are the signs of some instability that might be occurring," Rizzo told CNN.

Dr. Lakiea Wright, a specialist in allergies and immunology at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, said temperature should be taken daily so patients can have that information if they visit the doctor.

Take note of your medications

It's important to know where your rescue [inhaler](#) is in the case of an attack.

"We have data that is suggesting you should have a rescue inhaler no matter what else you are taking at hand," said spokesperson for the American Lung Association Dr. Mitchell Glass to CNN. "So that would be your albuterol or levalbuterol, the inhaler that is strictly for rescue if you have an acute

attack."

You should also ensure the device is not expired.

"You really want to make sure that what you're using is active and hasn't been sitting on the shelf for two years because you 'quote' haven't had an attack," Glass said.

Learn the right way to use your inhaler (or spacer)

Although you may have had asthma for years, it's important to know the right way to take your medications—whether by an inhaler or a spacer, which allows the medication from an inhaler to be more accurately delivered. Correct usage may depend on the kind of inhaler you have.

"I have (patients) get their inhalers and their spacer and demonstrate how they're using it so I can make sure they're using it correctly," pediatrics Dr. Matt Dougherty of Esse Health in St. Louis, Missouri told CNN.

Brushing up on correct usage can be important at any age, however.

Have an action plan

Because triggers vary from person to person, [asthma sufferers](#) need to ensure they have a treatment plan and use it.

"That asthma action plan will help them decide, "Do I need to call my doctor and get any additional medication?" And I emphasize calling a doctor because you don't want to rush into the office or the emergency room unless you are in severe distress," said Rizzo to CNN.

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