



Coronavirus (COVID 19)
Plan for managing your Asthma
from the team at
Coltishall Medical Practice
01603 737593



We are very aware that this is a particularly difficult time for those with ongoing medical conditions and have some information to help you manage your condition. We still have doctors and nurses in the surgery that can speak to you on the phone about your symptoms and prescribe remotely or see you if a consultation is clinically indicated. Please do not ignore any deterioration in your symptoms as early management can keep you well.

Please ensure that you have a suitable amount of your usual medication. We are prescribing as usual a month supply at a time. There is no need to order extra medication as this could lead to a shortage.

If you usually monitor your peak flows please continue to do so. If your peak flow is dropping to 60% of your best action will need to be taken. If your asthma has previously required you to have been issued with an ongoing **rescue pack (oral steroids and antibiotics)** please ensure that it is in date and ready for use. However it is very important at this time that you do not increase your steroid inhalers or start oral steroids without a clinical indication.

Manage your asthma well to reduce the risk from coronavirus

- **Keep taking your preventer inhaler daily as prescribed.** This will help cut your risk of an asthma attack being triggered by any respiratory virus, including coronavirus.
- **Carry your reliever inhaler** (usually blue) with you every day, in case you feel your asthma symptoms flaring up.
- Watch the videos on the asthma UK website to check you are using a **good inhaler technique** <https://.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhalers-medicine-treatments/using-inhalers>
- Download and use an asthma action plan to help you recognise and manage your asthma symptoms when they come, or use the plan you have already been given in the surgery. <https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/manage-your-asthma/action-plan>
- Start a peak flow diary, if you have a peak flow meter. If you don't have a peak flow meter, think about getting one from your GP or pharmacist, as it can be a good way of tracking your asthma and helping to tell the difference between asthma symptoms and COVID-19 symptoms. It can also help your medical team to assess you over the phone or video.

Colds or other respiratory infections can affect your asthma.

5 ways to protect yourself from an asthma attack when you have a cold or flu:

1. If you've got a preventer inhaler, take it every day, as prescribed. It helps to control inflammation in your lungs, meaning you're less likely to have an asthma attack even if you do come into contact with a trigger like a cold or flu virus. Carry your reliever inhaler (usually blue) with you. If you need to use it three or more times a week, see your doctor.
2. Keep your medicines close so you can reach them if you're ill in bed - you still need to take your preventer inhaler as prescribed.
3. Don't ignore your symptoms, especially if you feel breathless or wheezy - you might think it's 'just a cold', but remember it could trigger a potentially life-threatening asthma attack.
4. If after using your reliever inhaler your symptoms return within four hours, make an appointment with your doctor.
5. Rest. Take paracetamol for aches and pains and drink lots of water and other drinks. Flu especially can really wipe you out, so don't try to do too much too soon.

What to do if your asthma is getting worse

It's important that you know the signs of an exacerbation or flare-up in your condition and have a plan in place about what to do. Using your action plan will help in this process.

It may be tricky to work out whether new symptoms are due to COVID-19 or due to an exacerbation or flare-up of your condition. Typically, exacerbations of COPD and asthma are not associated with a high fever.

If your asthma is getting worse and you **don't have symptoms** of COVID-19, make an urgent telephone triage appointment to speak to your GP on **01603 737593**. We may then ask to speak to you by phone call or video call. Please note video calling will require someone in the house to have a valid mobile number and either a smartphone or computer with a camera.

If your asthma is getting worse and you **have symptoms** of COVID-19, please use the 111 online service or call 111. Don't come to the surgery.

When you contact 111:

- Let them know that you have asthma and that you're getting asthma symptoms.
- Explain how often you are using your reliever inhaler and if it's not working completely or lasting for 4 hours.
- Follow the instructions given to you by 111.
- If your symptoms get worse quickly and you're worried you are having an asthma attack, call 999 and let them know you may have coronavirus and are having an asthma attack.

What to do in an asthma attack

-  **1 Sit up straight** – try to keep calm.
-  **2 Take one puff of your reliever inhaler** (usually blue) every 30-60 seconds up to 10 puffs.
-  **3 If you feel worse at any point OR you don't feel better after 10 puffs call 999 for an ambulance.**
-  **4 Repeat step 2 after 15 minutes** while you're waiting for an ambulance.

IMPORTANT! Not applicable to SMART or MART medicine regimes. Speak to your GP or asthma nurse for further information.

www.asthma.org.uk



You're having an asthma attack if you are experiencing any of these:

- Your blue reliever isn't helping, or you need to use it more than every four hours
- You're wheezing a lot, have a very tight chest, or you're coughing a lot
- You're breathless and find it difficult to walk or talk
- Your breathing is getting faster and it feels like you can't get your breath in properly

Quit smoking

If you smoke, it's vital to quit. People who smoke are five times more likely to get flu and twice as likely to get pneumonia.

Quitting smoking is one of the best ways to protect yourself from viral infections, including coronavirus.

Social Help

You should make plans to help you cope if the spread of the virus causes significant disruption, or if you get symptoms and need to self-isolate. This might include making sure you know how you would get your medicines, food and other essential items if you had to self-isolate, and thinking about how you would stay in touch with friends and family.

If you need assistance with managing to get essential items such as food or medications please call us at the surgery and we can refer you for a social prescription. We will need the following information:

Name

DOB

NHS Number (we can help you with that)

Contact Phone Number/s

Address

Also if you specifically require help with prescription medication deliveries you can contact:

Broadland District Council 01508 533 933

North Norfolk District Council 01263 516000

Help if you're feeling worried

Some people with lung conditions are telling us that they feel very worried and anxious about coronavirus.

It's normal to have these sorts of feelings at a time like this if you live with a lung condition.

Here's some tips to help you cope:

- Only look at reliable sources of information about coronavirus that are updated regularly, such as the NHS, to help you feel more in control
- Watch out for bad habits – look for ideas of exercises you can do at home. Don't increase the amount of alcohol you drink
- Keep in touch with your friends and family – in stressful times we cope better with support from those close to us
- Involve your family, including your children, in plans to keep well

For the most up to date information and guidance visit [Public Health England](#) and the [NHS](#).