Helping patients achieve hay fever and asthma control this spring.

2.7 million Australians have asthma, 80% of these people have hay fever too. Help them get well with Asthma Australia's free resources and services.
Asthma and Hay Fever (Allergic Rhinitis):
An information sheet for Pharmacies

Asthma and hay fever are closely linked, both characterized by inflammation and sensitivity throughout the respiratory system. Asthma affects 2.7 million Australians. About 80% of people with asthma also have hay fever and between 15% to 30% of people with hay fever also have asthma.¹

Managing hay fever and allergy is part of asthma care and improving asthma control. Better control and management of hay fever has been shown to improve asthma control in both adults and children.²⁻⁷⁻⁸⁻⁹

People with asthma and hay fever experience:
- Increased number of asthma flare-ups
- Increased number of visits to their GP and asthma-related hospitalisations
- More time off work or school
- Higher annual medical costs²⁻³⁻⁴

Hay fever can also result in:
- Disturbed sleep
- Daytime tiredness
- Recurrent headaches
- Poor concentration
- Increased risk of ear infections in children
- Recurrent sinus infections in adults

Common symptoms of hay fever are:
- Itchy nose or eyes
- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Blocked nose
- Throat clearing
- Snoring

If people present with symptoms of asthma or hay fever e.g. cough, wheeze or sneeze in the pollen season, they may be susceptible to thunderstorm asthma. Discuss asthma and hay fever and the medications used to treat these conditions. It is also recommended they visit their GP to have symptoms checked, get a proper diagnosis and a written Asthma Action Plan and/or an Allergic Rhinitis (hay fever) Treatment Plan.

Treatments for asthma and hay fever:
- Most patients with asthma should be taking a regular inhaled corticosteroid (ICS) containing preventer, to minimise their risk of asthma-related death by 50–85%.⁵
- Intranasal corticosteroids are the most effective treatment for hay fever and can improve all symptoms, especially nasal congestion.
- Use of even a low dose of ICS, if taken regularly, reduces the risk of flare-ups.⁵

Key tips for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Assistants:
- Check for a diagnosis of hay fever or asthma when dispensing asthma or hay fever medication – ask people with asthma and/or hay fever if they experience symptoms of the eyes, nose, throat or lungs.
- Discuss hay fever symptoms and treatment options with people with asthma.
- Demonstrate and check delivery device technique for asthma medications and/or intranasal sprays. Read the Asthma Medications and Devices brochure at www.asthma.org.au for more information.
- Assess level of asthma control – Use the Asthma Control Test™ available at www.asthma.org.au
- Check for a written Asthma Action Plan or Allergic Rhinitis (hay fever) Treatment Plan.

Recommended people with co-existing asthma and hay fever to see their GP if:
- Persistent (≥ 4 days per week and ≥ 4 weeks)¹⁰, moderate to severe symptoms of hay fever are present – see the Australian Asthma Guidelines for classification of hay fever www.asthmahandbook.org.au/clinical-issues/allergies/allergic-rhinitis
- Symptoms are suggestive of uncontrolled asthma in people with a diagnosis – is their Asthma Control Score 19 or less?
- Hay fever symptoms are not well controlled by self-management with over-the-counter medicines (e.g. S2 intranasal corticosteroids, oral antihistamines).
- Hay fever treatment is required for more than four weeks at a time.
- There are complications (e.g. pain, loss of hearing or sense of smell, persistent cough)

Visit the Australian Asthma Guidelines for further information about managing allergic rhinitis in people with asthma: www.asthmahandbook.org.au/clinical-issues/allergies/allergic-rhinitis

Download Asthma Australia’s Asthma App – a patient education tool to help support and educate people with asthma from the iTunes app store or Google Play.

Refer your patients with asthma to Asthma Australia’s Patient Education Referral Service visit www.asthma.org.au/referrals

SPRING ASTHMA TIPS

Be aware of high pollen days
If you experience hay fever and/or pollen is a trigger for your asthma, it is important to be aware of when high levels of pollen are present in the air. People with asthma and hay fever should monitor relevant apps and websites over spring including AusPollen and AirRater.

On high pollen days, close your windows and doors. If you have an air conditioner, make sure it is turned to ‘circulate’ so it doesn’t bring the outdoor pollens inside.

Treat your hay fever symptoms
Managing hay fever is an important part of overall asthma care as hay fever can make asthma worse and more difficult to control. Treatment of hay fever depends on the severity and frequency of your hay fever symptoms.

Treatment options include:
- Antihistamines
- Saline sprays/irrigations
- Corticosteroid nasal sprays
- Decongestants

Speak to your doctor or pharmacists about the best treatment for your hay fever.

Manage your risk of thunderstorm asthma

If you are at an increased risk of thunderstorm asthma:

- Understand the Epidemic Thunderstorm Asthma phenomenon.
- Have a written Asthma Action Plan (where advised by your doctor) and/or have practical knowledge of the four steps of Asthma First Aid.
- Have reliever medication available in grass pollen season and be aware of how to use it (ideally with a spacer).
- Be alert to and act on the development of asthma symptoms as explained in your written Asthma Action Plan if you have one, or if you don’t, use Asthma First Aid.

- Be aware of thunderstorm forecasts particularly on HIGH or EXTREME pollen count days. Where possible avoid being outside during thunderstorms during the grass pollen season – especially in the wind gusts that come before the storm. Go inside and close your doors and windows and if you have your air conditioner on, turn it to recirculate.
- Never ignore asthma symptoms like breathlessness, wheezing and tightness in the chest. Start Asthma First Aid immediately and call Triple Zero “000” for help if symptoms do not get any better or if they start to get worse.

Low allergen gardens

Gardens can harbor allergens that can trigger asthma, hay fever and allergy symptoms.

Some top tips to reduce the impact of gardening on your asthma (alongside good asthma management) include:

- Choosing Australian native plants and brightly coloured, large flowering plants that are pollinated by birds/insects rather than wind, as they don’t release pollen into the air.
- Avoiding plants with strong fragrances or odour (e.g. jasmines), especially planted next to entrances or windows. Exceptions include roses.
- Choosing native or slow-growing, low or no pollen grass that does not require frequent mowing
- Using inorganic mulches such as pebbles or gravel to reduce weeds and mould spores
- Weeding the garden often to avoid them flowering or seeding
- Avoiding compost heaps
- Avoiding gardening on windy days when pollen may be airborne

The spring season can often bring additional challenges for people with asthma. Follow our checklist to better manage your asthma and allergies this spring.
BE PREPARED FOR SPRING

Good asthma management year-round is the key to ensuring you are ready for spring.

Visit your doctor for an asthma review
Visit your doctor every six - 12 months for an asthma review

With your doctor:
• assess your current level of asthma control
• make sure you are on the right medicines to manage your asthma (e.g. a preventer)
• check your inhaler technique
• ensure your Asthma Action Plan is up-to-date
• ask about your asthma, your treatment and how to stay healthy during winter

Get a written Asthma Action Plan

An Asthma Action Plan is something developed with a doctor to help provide clear instructions on what to do when experiencing asthma symptoms or during an asthma flare-up and should include instructions about managing asthma alongside identified triggers.

With your doctor, develop or update your written Asthma Action Plan.

Follow a written asthma action plan for:
• a better controlled asthma
• fewer asthma flare-ups
• fewer days off work or school
• reduced reliever medication use
• fewer hospital visits

Take the Asthma Control Test
If you have experienced any of the following in the last four weeks it indicates your asthma may not be under control.
• Daytime asthma symptoms more than two days per week
• Need for reliever more than two days per week
• Any limitation on activities due to asthma symptoms
• Any asthma symptoms during the night or on waking
Visit asthma.org.au/asthma-control-test to get your Asthma Score.

Preventer - every day, even when well
Preventers work to reduce the inflammation in the airways. Regular use of your preventer makes the airways less sensitive, which reduces the frequency and severity of asthma symptoms (reducing the need for your reliever medication) and the risk of future flare-ups. Daily use of a preventer is key to keeping well.

Check your device technique
Up to 90% of people are thought to use their inhalers incorrectly, which means the dose of medicine isn’t getting into the lungs where it's needed. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to check you are using your inhaler medication device correctly.

Learn the steps of Asthma First Aid
The Asthma First Aid app is your go-to tool for an asthma emergency. It covers both first aid in the event of an asthma emergency plus the ability to review each of the four first aid steps. Download the Asthma First Aid app from the App Store or Google Play.

For more information call 1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 462) or visit asthma.org.au/asthmaиндисguise #AsthmaInDisguise

Partners: Bayer, AstraZeneca, Flo
1. Download template
2. Complete
3. Send
   • Fax
   • Secure message

An asthma coach will call your patient within a week of receiving the referral.

A summary report of the call will be sent to the patient, referrer and their GP.

Here’s what our patients say...

“I felt like someone was truly listening to me.”

“It helped me feel more confident about my son’s asthma. When he was diagnosed, I was very overwhelmed.”

“I found it helpful to have my progress monitored, especially as I was newly diagnosed.”

“Would recommend to anyone with asthma who has concerns.”

“Previously I knew nothing about asthma, now I can control it and I feel more confident.”

“I learned so much and it was helpful to have a friendly ear on the line.”

This free coaching and support service* is available for patients with asthma and/or their carers.

**Referral Templates** asthma.org.au/referrals

Fax: 07 3257 1080  Message: HealthLink - asthmas / Medical-Objects - FA40060001U

For more information, contact Asthma Australia on 1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 462) or visit asthma.org.au

*Supported by the Australian Government.
THE COACH PROGRAM®

REFERRAL SERVICE

The COACH Program® is available for patients aged 12 years and older with a confirmed asthma diagnosis.

REFERRER DETAILS

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PATIENT CONSENT AND CONTACT DETAILS

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| Interpreter required: | No | Yes | Language: |

Consent has been obtained from this patient/carer to provide their contact details to Asthma Australia for provision of free asthma education and support through The COACH Program®.

NOTES

SEND VIA asthmaaustralia.org.au/referrals  FAX: 07 3257 1080
Secure Message: >search"asthma"  Medical-Objects: FA40060001U  HealthLink: (asthmaus)
For more information, contact Asthma Australia on 1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 462) or visit asthma.org.au