



Lung Health



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Keep track of your asthma symptoms

If you have asthma, tracking your symptoms can help you take steps to keep breathing well.

Gather the clues

What should you track? Start with:

- ✓ **Daytime symptoms.** Note how often your asthma bothers you during the day — and what symptoms you have.
- ✓ **Nighttime symptoms.** Are you ever woken up by asthma? Make a note of how often this happens.
- ✓ **Your inhaler use.** How often do you need your quick-relief inhaler? If there's been an increase or you need to refill it more than twice a year, let your provider know.

✓ **How you feel when being active.** Does your asthma act up when you do normal things, like take a walk or climb stairs?

Your provider may also ask you to use a peak flow meter and track your results. This device measures how well you're breathing.

Now, take action!

Bring your notes to each provider visit — and go over your asthma action plan. It should tell you what to do when your asthma is acting up.

Source: American Lung Association (Lung.org)

What is asthma?

People with asthma have sensitive airways. The passages to the lungs swell, narrow and produce extra mucus in response to certain things — called triggers. These triggers make it hard to breathe. They can also cause coughing, wheezing or a tight feeling in the chest. People with asthma can have an active life if they keep it under control.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI.NIH.gov)

For help with making an appointment to get the COVID-19 immunization (shot), visit [COVID19.NJ.gov/Pages/Vaccine](https://www.covid19.nj.gov/Pages/Vaccine).

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Eat well, breathe better

A healthy diet is important if you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Making the right choices may help you breathe easier.

For instance, eating a good source of protein at least twice a day can help keep

the muscles you use for breathing strong.

For some people, eating fewer carbs and more fats is best for breathing.

Some people may need to limit salt (sodium) in their diet.

Ask your provider what's best for you.

Too tired or full to eat?

If COPD affects your appetite or energy, you might feel too tired or full to eat. Try to:

- Rest before eating.
- Eat four to six small meals a day rather than three big ones.
- Eat your biggest meals earlier in the day.
- Drink water an hour after meals, not with them.

Sources: American Dietetic Association (EatRight.org); American Lung Association (Lung.org); COPD Foundation (COPDFoundation.org)

Understanding your asthma medicines

If you have asthma, there are two main types of medicine you may need.

Quick-relief medicines

What they do: Help you breathe again when your symptoms flare up.

How they come: Inhalers.

When to take them: As needed. Follow your action plan.

Long-term control medicines

What they do: Prevent flare-ups.

How they come: Pills or inhalers.

When to take them: Daily. Follow your action plan.

Your provider might recommend other pills or shots to help control your allergy triggers too.

Be med-smart

To get the most from your medicines, take them just as your provider directs. Your asthma action plan can remind you when and how to take them to keep breathing well.

Sources: American Lung Association (Lung.org); National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI.NIH.gov)

4 ways to take charge


If you have a chronic condition, take it step by step:

1. Learn all you can about it.
2. Work with your provider on a care plan.
3. Take your medications.
4. Aim for healthy habits.


Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK.NIH.gov)

Avoid things that make COPD worse

What's the best way to protect your lungs if you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)?


 **If you smoke, the first — and most important — step is to stop.** Ask others not to smoke around you too. If you're having trouble quitting, call the New Jersey Quitline at **1-866-NJSTOPS (1-866-657-8677)** or visit **NJQuitline.org** for help.

Then do your best to avoid other things that make breathing harder.

 **Dust and air pollution.** If possible, stay indoors and keep your windows closed when there's lots of pollution or dust outside.

 **Chemical fumes.** Ask your provider what you

can do to lower your risk at work and at home.

 **Lung infections.** Fight off cold and flu germs by washing your hands often. Get immunizations (shots) to protect you from the flu and pneumonia.

Sources: American Lung Association (Lung.org); National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI.NIH.gov)



What is COPD?

COPD stands for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It describes two lung conditions that make it harder to breathe; chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Most people with COPD have both. People who have COPD may have shortness of breath, wheezing or a cough that won't quit.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI.NIH.gov)

It's not too late!

A yearly flu immunization (shot) is the best way to protect yourself from the flu. If you haven't had yours yet, ask your provider or pharmacist.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC.gov)

Caregivers: Seek the help you deserve

Need support? Ask your loved one's care manager about services that may be open to you.

 Did you know that you may be able to get Lifeline cell service plus a smartphone at no cost to you? Go to **AetnaBetterHealth.com/NewJersey** or call Member Services at **1-855-232-3596 (TTY: 711)** and ask about the Assurance Wireless Lifeline program.

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Heart Health



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Quitting smoking: 3 places to turn for help

If you have high blood pressure and you smoke, quitting is one of the best things you can do for your heart. It can:

↓ **Lower your risk of heart disease.**

↑ **Add years to your life.**

You can do this!

If you need help to kick the habit, here are three ways to find support:

1. **Talk to your primary care provider (PCP).** Your PCP can offer resources and medicines to help you quit.

2. **Join a support group.** You'll meet other people who want to stop smoking. It's a chance to share encouragement and tips.

3. **Call a free quit line.** You can talk to experts on quitting smoking. Call the New Jersey Quitline at **1-866-NJSTOPS (1-866-657-8677)** or visit **NJQuitline.org** for help.

Sources: American Cancer Society (Cancer.org); American Heart Association (Heart.org); National Cancer Institute (SmokeFree.gov)

What is hypertension (high blood pressure)?

Healthy blood pressure is usually less than 120/80 mm Hg. For most adults, 130/80 or more is high. That's called hypertension, or high blood pressure. For people with diabetes or kidney disease, the danger zone may start lower. Talk with your provider about what's healthy for you.

Sources: American Heart Association (Heart.org); National Institutes of Health (NIDDK.NIH.gov; NHLBI.NIH.gov)

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Exercise: Show your heart some love

If you have heart failure, exercise may help your heart work better. You'll likely have more energy too. Your daily activities may even be easier.

To get started:

1. **Ask your provider first.** Double-check that it's safe for you to exercise. Find out what activities are best for you. You may need to start with a supervised exercise program.
2. **Choose your moves.** Most activities are good for you, even many hobbies. Be sure to include things that will get your heart pumping, such as walking or swimming.
3. **Don't overdo it.** Start slowly and rest often. Even if you only walk for a few minutes each day, that's a good start. Over time, you'll build the strength to do more.



Exercise is good medicine. But it doesn't replace your other medicines. Keep taking them exactly as your provider tells you to.

Sources: American Heart Association (Heart.org); Heart Failure Society of America (HFSA.org)

What is heart failure?

Having heart failure means that the heart is not pumping as well as it should. The body may not get the oxygen it needs, making a person feel tired or short of breath. When heart failure is not managed well, everyday tasks like walking, climbing stairs and carrying groceries can become very hard. And it can make you very sick if not treated.




Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI.NIH.gov)

3 steps to living well with heart failure

More energy. Better breathing.

If you're living with heart failure, those are good goals to keep in sight. They'll help keep you motivated as you tackle changes that can make a big difference in how you feel.

These three steps can help you keep your disease from getting worse.


1.  **Watch for flare-ups.** When your symptoms act up, call your provider's office right away. The sooner you call, the better your chances of avoiding a hospital stay.
2.  **Weigh yourself every day.** Sudden weight gain may be an early tip-off that heart failure is getting worse. Call your provider if you gain:
 - Two or three pounds in one day.
 - Five pounds or more in one week.
3.  **Go easy on fluids.** Heart failure makes it more likely that fluid will build up in your body. Ask your provider how much to drink each day.


Sources: American College of Cardiology (CardioSmart.org); American Heart Association (Heart.org)


Take a step toward heart-healthy eating


Healthy food choices can help your heart, even if you already have heart disease.


Start with small steps


 **Go for whole grains.** Choose whole-wheat breads, pastas, cereals and tortillas. Choose brown rice instead of white.

 **Use a new cooking oil.** Olive and canola oils are better for you than butter or margarine.


 **Cut back on salt.** Read nutrition labels to find foods low in sodium (another name for salt).

 **Switch to low-fat dairy.** When you get used to that, try nonfat next.

 **Sip sugar-free drinks.** Make water taste better by adding lemon.

 **Choose leaner proteins.** Go for fish, skinless poultry or low-fat ground meats.



 **Plan one meatless meal a week.** Feature beans or pasta with veggies.

Once you've mastered one of these changes, give another a try.

Sources: *Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (EatRight.org)*; *American Heart Association (Heart.org)*

What is CAD?

Coronary artery disease (CAD) is a common type of heart disease. It happens when arteries become hard and narrow with cholesterol and plaque, which prevents the heart from getting enough blood and oxygen. CAD can lead to chest pain, heart failure, heart attack or stroke.

Source: *National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI.NIH.gov)*

High blood pressure: Check it at home

Is your blood pressure high? If so, your provider may want you to track it with a home monitor.

Six tips for at-home tests

For more accurate readings at home:

1. Do the test at the same time each day.
2. Don't exercise, smoke, or drink caffeine or alcohol within 30 minutes of a test.
3. Empty your bladder and sit quietly for five minutes before a test.
4. Sit up straight with your back against a chair. Put both feet flat on the floor. Rest your arm on the table.
5. Put the bottom of the blood pressure cuff above the bend of your elbow. Wrap the cuff around your bare arm, not over clothing.
6. Follow any other instructions your provider gave you. For instance, you may be asked to take two or more readings each time.

Source: *American Heart Association (Heart.org)*



Get healthy after a heart attack

If you've had a heart attack, there are things you can do to get on the road to recovery and better health.

See your provider regularly. You'll learn how to help your heart mend and lower your risk for another heart attack.

Take your medicines. They can help prevent future heart trouble.

Commit to quit. If you smoke, ask your provider for help quitting.

Change your eating habits. Choose a variety of low-fat,

heart-healthy foods. You may need to cut back on sodium (salt) and added sugars too.

Get active again. Ask your provider how to safely begin. It might be best to start with a supervised cardiac rehab program.

Tell your provider how you feel. You might feel sad, angry or scared after a heart attack. If it starts to get in the way of your recovery, ask for help.

Source: American Heart Association (Heart.org)

It's not too late!

A yearly flu immunization (shot) is the best way to protect yourself from the flu. If you haven't had yours yet, ask your provider or pharmacist.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC.gov)

4 ways to take charge


If you have a chronic condition, take it step by step:

1. Learn all you can about it.
2. Work with your provider on a care plan.
3. Take your medications.
4. Aim for healthy habits.

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK.NIH.gov)

Caregivers: Seek the help you deserve

Need support? Ask your loved one's care manager about services that may be open to you.

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Diabetes



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Improve your health by eating healthy

Many chronic conditions, including diabetes, can be managed through simple lifestyle changes and healthy eating.

Medical nutrition therapy, sometimes referred to as MNT, can be part of your overall diabetes care and is a covered benefit with Aetna Better Health of New Jersey. MNT can help you meet your treatment goals. Using an individualized nutrition plan, MNT is approved by your provider and developed by a licensed dietitian. The dietitian assesses your nutritional needs and provides nutrition health education to you at no cost.

With MNT, a licensed dietitian can help you with some of the following:

- Make smarter choices for meal planning, dining out and grocery shopping.

- Teach you how to read food labels.
- Set nutrition goals.
- Understand the importance of physical activity and portion control.

MNT can reduce and prevent complications associated with certain chronic and short-term illnesses. Your health care provider can determine if MNT will help support your health goals.

As an Aetna Better Health of New Jersey member, you are eligible for MNT and access to a licensed dietitian. This is a covered benefit. If you would like to learn more about MNT, please discuss it with your health care provider. You can also call Aetna Better Health of New Jersey at **1-855-232-3596 (TTY: 711)** to learn more about your benefits.

Defining diabetes

Having diabetes means the body has trouble making or using the hormone insulin. The body needs insulin to help turn the food we eat into energy. If that doesn't happen, sugar (glucose) builds up in the blood. That can lead to serious health problems.

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK.NIH.gov)

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Take steps to head off kidney disease


You need healthy kidneys to get rid of wastes and extra fluids from your blood.

Over time, high blood sugar from diabetes can harm the kidneys. Many people with diabetes also have high blood pressure, which can hurt the kidneys too.

Protect your future

You can lower your chances of getting kidney disease. Here's how:

 **Meet your goals.** Ask your provider what your blood sugar and blood pressure goals should be and what changes might help you meet them.

 **Keep up with check-ups and tests.** These can help catch kidney disease early, when treatment may stop it from getting worse.



Take your medicines.

They can help your kidneys stay well.

Cut back on salt (sodium).

It can boost blood pressure. Ask your provider if you should limit protein too.

Don't use alcohol or tobacco.

Ask your provider for help if you need to quit.

Sources: American Diabetes Association ([Diabetes.org](https://www.diabetes.org)); National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases ([NIDDK.NIH.gov](https://www.niddk.nih.gov))

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Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases ([NIDDK.NIH.gov](https://www.niddk.nih.gov))

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It's not too late!

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Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov))

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Depression



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Taking antidepressants wisely


If you've been diagnosed with depression, there are things you can do to feel better.


Make your meds work for you


If your treatment plan includes medicines, here are a few things to know:

 **They don't all work the same way.** Different antidepressants work in different ways. They're meant to change the brain chemicals that regulate mood.

 **They need time to work.** You may need to take them for up to six weeks to feel the full effect.

 **Some people aren't helped by their first antidepressant.** You may need to try several types — or a combination — to find what works best for you.

 **Don't stop taking your medicine.** If you stop too soon, your depression may come back.

 **Talk therapy may help your medicine work better.** Seeing your therapist regularly can help you stay on track with your treatment goals and learn helpful coping techniques.

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH.NIH.gov); U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA.gov)

Are you having thoughts about hurting yourself or others? Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988** or go to the nearest emergency room.

Signs of depression

Tell your provider if you have symptoms of depression for two weeks or longer. You might:

- Feel sad, hopeless or tired.
- Feel guilty or worthless.
- Feel anxious or irritable.
- Lose interest in things you once enjoyed.
- Have trouble focusing or making decisions.
- Sleep too much or too little.
- Eat too much or too little.
- Have aches and pains that don't go away.
- Think about death.

Sources: Mental Health America (MentalHealthAmerica.net); National Institutes of Health (NIMH.NIH.gov)

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Make a crisis prevention plan

If you have depression, it can change how you feel and think. It can even make you feel like hurting yourself.

Those thoughts are a symptom of your illness. You won't always feel that way — and treatment can help you enjoy life again.

Put your safety first

In the meantime, take steps like these to protect yourself:

Put dangers out of reach.

Get rid of any weapons, pills or other things you might use to hurt yourself.

Manage your moods. Work with a therapist to learn what sets off a crisis, how to spot your warning signs and what to do about them.

Make a list of lifelines. These are trusted family members



and friends you can talk to if you start to feel bad.

My lifelines

- My provider: _____
- Suicide hotline: **988**
- **911**
- _____
- _____

Sources: *Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSAlliance.org)*; *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SuicidePreventionLifeline.org)*

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Source: *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC.gov)*

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