

# Tips for Parents of Teens with Asthma

- ◆ Increase his/her responsibility as they age. Give your teen freedom and responsibility in their own self-care as well as restrictions and supervisions.
- ◆ Some teens find it difficult to accept an asthma diagnosis which makes parental guidance and vigilance in a treatment plan all the more vital.
- ◆ With the teenagers years should start the teen's active involvement in an asthma management plan. Teens should actively participate in disease management, medication, and goal setting. Parents should stress the consequences of failure to manage asthma. Teens should be nearly independent in self-managing. Parents need to step back and allow their teen to take control of their own health but yet keep lines of communication open and intervene if necessary.
- ◆ Teens resist chronic monitoring and frequently stop taking their medications or only take them intermittently. Parents should assume all teens are risk-takers. Treatment plans need to be as simple as possible so they will follow through.
- ◆ Peer pressure is a major factor for teens that fail to adhere to treatment and management plans. Sometimes the desire to fit into a social group sins out against the teen's own personal health. Parents may want to develop "contracts" with their teens that outline a management plan and offer rewards and consequences.
- ◆ Take an open and honest approach with your teen. Recognize that your teen is not burdened with an unmanageable disease but that he/she is simply with asthma.
- ◆ Many adolescents don't want to take medication in front of their friends. Talk to his/hers medical provider to find out if your teen's medication regimen can be taken at home, morning and night. This will also allow parents to make sure their teen is getting all the medication they need.
- ◆ Many teens stop taking their preventive medication and begin to rely only on their quick-relief medication. This can be dangerous and even fatal. If this becomes a concern, discuss it with your medical provider immediately.
- ◆ It is common for teens to deny they have asthma so they stop taking medication and have more flare-ups and symptoms. If this happens, you may need to monitor your teen's care until he/she is ready to do it by him/herself.



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- ◆ Remember to maintain your teen’s dignity when dealing with asthma. Teens should be actively included in all discussion and treatment choice because they are the ones who ultimately have to deal with side effects and daily compliance.
- ◆ Uncontrolled asthma can lead to depressions and low self-esteem. These feelings may manifest in emotional outburst and poor school performance. Be proactive with early intervention by a school counselor, teachers, or physicians to encourage compliance with the medical provider’s orders.
- ◆ Teens with asthma should be encouraged to live as normal a life as possible with the help of medications and thoughtful limitations. Some teens tend to shy away from normal activities such as sports and even school dances because they are afraid of having a flare-up. Others learn to use asthma as a “crutch” or excuse for getting out of activities and chores. Educate your teen to understand how monitoring medication and breathing lets him/her do just about anything he/she wants to do.
- ◆ Teenagers are changing physically and emotionally. They worry about being different, they test limits, and they make choices and mistakes. Priorities change and asthma is often low on the list. Teens often rebel against their parent’s rules so they may take risks with their health.
- ◆ You can help your teen through this time by being honest, sensitive, and supportive. Teens need to learn about making decisions and living with the outcome. In order for them to make good decisions, they need the facts about asthma. They need to know how the choices they make about asthma will affect them. Your teen’s health care team can provide some of this information. Also, continues to provide support with asthma care tasks.
- ◆ Watch your own actions and feelings. Be sure to know the difference between being supportive and nagging. Don’t try to take over if there are a few mild attacks, instead try to solve the problem together and ask how you can help.
- ◆ Keep communication open. When things are going well, praise your teen. When things are tough, recognize your teen’s frustrations.

*If you would like more information please contact:*

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