

INTRODUCTION TO THE ASTHMA DISEASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Board of Trustees of your Health & Welfare Plan entered into an agreement with *RJLee & Associates, LLP*, to provide plan participants Disease Management and Wellness Programs. These programs assist the Welfare Plan in accomplishing its goal of finding innovative new ways to help you and your family stay healthy. The first Disease Management Program targeted Diabetes.

The second program targets Asthma. More than 17 million people in the United States have asthma. Of these, almost 5 million are children. Asthma is the reason for nearly half a million hospital stays each year. Its treatment costs billions of dollars each year.

Asthma is an inflammatory disease of the lung airways. With asthma, the airways are inflamed (swollen) and react easily to certain things called triggers - like viruses, smoke, or pollen. When the inflamed airways react, they get narrow and make it hard to breathe. Common asthma symptoms are wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness. When these symptoms get worse, it's an asthma attack. Asthma symptoms may come and go, but asthma is always there. It can be controlled with proper, long-term treatment. But it cannot be cured. To keep it under control, you need to work with your doctor and keep taking care of it.

You can help get your asthma under control and keep it under control if you do a few simple things.

- **Talk openly with your doctor**
 - Tell your doctor your concerns about your asthma, your medicines, and your health
 - If you take medicine that you must inhale, be sure that you are doing it right
- **Ask your doctor for a written treatment plan, then be sure to follow it**
 - A written treatment plan will tell you when to take each of your asthma medicines
- **Watch for early symptoms and respond quickly**
 - If you respond quickly to the first signs that your asthma is getting worse, you can prevent serious attacks
- **Stay away from things that make your asthma worse**
 - These things are called triggers
 - Learn what things start or prompt your asthma symptoms and avoid or control them
 - Talk to your doctor about what makes your asthma worse and what to do about those things
- **See your doctor *at least every 6 months***
 - Regular visits will let your doctor check your progress

Peak flow meters can help you find out what your triggers are. They can tell you when an asthma episode is coming - even before you feel symptoms. Peak flow meters measure how well you are breathing. The peak flow meter is simple and small. It can be used at home or at work. Talk to your doctor to find out if a peak flow meter would be helpful for you.

Most asthma episodes or attacks start slowly. Most people can tell when an asthma episode is coming. You can often stop an asthma episode when you catch it early and take your medicine. Learn what your warning signs are. Make a plan with your doctor about what to do when you notice your warning signs.

Talk to your doctor about your different asthma medicines. Some medicines need to be taken daily to prevent asthma symptoms (controller medication). Other medicine can relieve your symptoms once your symptoms begin (reliever medication). Take your medicine at the same time as one of your daily routines. Take it at meals, when you brush your teeth, or some other time you choose. Always carry with you your reliever inhaler that opens your airways.

Asthma doesn't have to put major limits on your life. There are many things that you can do to take control of your asthma and minimize its impact on your activities. You should expect from your asthma treatment:

- **No symptoms or minor symptoms of asthma (wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness)**
- **Sleeping through the night without asthma symptoms**
- **No time off from school or work due to asthma**
- **Full participation in physical activities**
- **No emergency room visits or stays in the hospital**
- **Little or no side effects from asthma medicine**

As in all matters of health, the best approach to keep asthma under control is to learn as much as you can about this disease. Perhaps the first place to start would be the **ASTHMA I.Q. QUIZ**. This will help you check what you know about asthma. **YOUR ASTHMA CAN BE CONTROLLED: EXPECT NOTHING LESS.**

We hope you find this information helpful. Through implementation of this program, we hope to provide you with an additional resource to improve your quality of life, and to prevent or reduce the impact of complications associated with asthma.