

COVID-19 and Asthma — Health Recommendations for People with Asthma

Updated April 7, 2020

At this time, the [Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\)](#) has noted there is an increased risk of more severe outcomes for Canadians:

- aged 65 and over
- with compromised immune systems
- with underlying medical conditions

Canadians are advised to avoid all non-essential travel.

As the situation develops around the globe, you can find the most up-to-date information for people in Canada on the [Government of Canada's website](#). Be sure to also check provincial and local authorities for information specific to your location.

You might be wondering what COVID-19 means for you, or your loved ones with asthma. When people with asthma get respiratory infections, it can trigger their asthma symptoms. Most people recover from COVID-19 after a period of rest, that may extend up to 14 days. In some, it can be more severe and, in rare cases, life-threatening. The symptoms are similar to other much more common illnesses such as a cold or flu, and include:

- cough;
- high temperature or fever,
- shortness of breath.

People of all ages can be infected by the virus, which causes respiratory disease. People with underlying chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease appear to be more at risk of severe effects.

Medication Recommendations

Asthma Canada recommends that Canadians with asthma ensure they renew or refill their asthma prescriptions with a 30-day supply so that they don't run out of medication, should they become ill.

Consult your healthcare provider days before you think you will run out of medications. Order your refills from the pharmacy at least one week in advance to be sure the medication is available.

If your medication is not available, your healthcare provider or pharmacist will assist you in developing a plan for replacing your medication. There are a number of different inhaled and oral medications that could be considered. Your pharmacist or healthcare provider should be able to advise you of the most appropriate alternative treatment plan in the event of a medication shortage.

If you normally order a prescription for *more* than 30 days of medication, you may find your pharmacist only dispenses a 30-day supply so that medications do not run out due to people stockpiling.

Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medication shortages. Do not rely on information found online.

Any changes made to 30-day refill prescriptions will increase the number of prescriptions and dispensing fees. However, provincial and territorial governments are currently setting limits in place to offset the cost. Speak to your pharmacist about cost and billing, or consult the Ministry of Health for your jurisdiction.

Asthma Canada recommends that Canadians with asthma continue to take their prescribed asthma medications unless their healthcare provider has advised otherwise. Stopping medication without consulting your healthcare provider is dangerous. Do not stop or modify your asthma medications because of concern about COVID-19. This includes biologics.

Asthma Management Recommendations

To protect yourself and reduce your risk of asthma symptoms, follow these simple asthma management steps:

- Keep taking your controller medication daily or as prescribed. This will help cut your risk of an asthma attack being triggered by any respiratory virus, including COVID-19.
- Carry your reliever inhaler with you every day, in case your asthma symptoms flare up.
- Monitor your asthma symptoms closely and follow your Asthma Action Plan to help you recognize and manage asthma symptoms, and know when to seek advice from your healthcare provider or emergency help.
- Take care of yourself. Get plenty of rest and fluids, and eat good nutritious food.
- Reach out to Asthma Canada's Asthma & Allergy HelpLine call-back service to connect with a Certified Respiratory Educator if you have questions about managing your asthma. Call 1-866-787-4050 or email info@asthma.ca

Below are also some straightforward steps everyone can take to lower the risk of getting and spreading COVID-19:

- [Practice social distancing/self-monitoring/self-isolation/isolation](#) as directed by [the Public Health Agency of Canada](#).
- Wash your hands thoroughly and often with soap and warm water for at least 30 seconds.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of your arm, not your hand.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, ears or mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, such as toys, phones and door handles. Launder frequently used items like bedding and plush toys often.
- Stay home if you are sick. Encourage those you know who are sick to stay home until they no longer have symptoms.
- Try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell.
- Make sure that you get high-quality information about COVID-19 from reliable sources. [The Public Health Agency of Canada](#) is a reliable source of information, as are provincial and territorial public health authorities.