Oh Nose! Coping with Asthma During Allergy Season

As spring gets closer, people with asthma may notice worse symptoms. Some allergens (dust, pollen, mold) can trigger your eyes, nose or throat to swell. When allergens get in your airway, the muscles around your airway can tighten, much like during an asthma flare-up.

Since allergies and asthma go hand-in-hand, get a head start on controlling your asthma this season! Talk to your doctor about your allergies. If you aren’t sure if you have allergies, ask your doctor for an allergy test.

Take your allergy and asthma medicines. Stay inside when it’s windy or when there is a lot of pollen in the air. Keep your windows closed, and take a shower after you spend time outside. Lastly, do some spring cleaning! Vacuum your carpets, wash your sheets, and dust your home with a wet cloth.

Going Greener

Member News has a new smaller size. It saves on print costs and paper. To go even greener, you can get Member News by e-mail. Send a note to editor@lacare.org and get our e-newsletter instead!
Q: I’ve heard the key to stop smoking is to have a plan. What does this mean?
A: Having a plan means knowing what to do before you try to stop smoking and what you will do instead of smoking. Think about why you want to quit. Write these reasons down and look at them when you have the urge to smoke.

Choose your “quit day.” This is the day you start your new life as a non-smoker. Make a list of the things you will do instead of smoking. Go for a walk, call a friend, or write a letter.

Q: I’ve tried to quit smoking many times. How can I quit for good?
A: Don’t give up. Your chance of success goes up each time you try to quit. Look back at past attempts and learn from them. What helped? What can you do differently this time?

Q: How do I get help quitting?
A: Talk to your doctor. He or she can give you written information, such as L.A. Care’s new handout, Live Smoke Free . . . One Day at a Time. Your doctor may also give you medication. You have the best chance of quitting for good if you use medicine and get counseling. You can get free help by calling the California Smoker’s Helpline at 1-800-NO-BUTTS (1-800-662-8887).

Diabetes and Your Diet:
3 Easy Tips for Eating Healthy!

For people with diabetes it is important to eat a healthy, balanced diet. Even making a few small changes can make a big difference in your blood sugar levels. Try these three easy tips for a healthy diet:

1. Eat three meals a day, with one or two snacks in between. This can help keep your blood sugar levels stable.
2. Choose high-fiber foods that will keep you fuller longer. Try whole-wheat or whole-grain bread, brown rice, and sweet potatoes instead of white bread, rice, and potatoes.
3. Limit the amount of sweets you eat. Choose smaller servings of desserts, and eat slowly so you can enjoy each bite.

Other ways to help control diabetes:

- Take your medicines on time
- Exercise
- Stay at a healthy weight
- Keep a record of your blood sugar tests
- Check your feet for cuts, red spots or swelling
- Brush your teeth after meals
- Get the tests you need: A1C blood, cholesterol, urine and eyes
Breastfeeding & Weight

Breast milk is easy to digest and it protects babies from disease. Breastfeeding lowers a woman’s risk of breast cancer. It saves money, too.

But did you know that breastfed babies are less likely to become obese (fat)? A new study from the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program shows that kids who were breastfed weigh less than other kids by the time they are 4 years old.

Why? Babies who are breastfed stop sucking when they are full. As these babies get older, they are less likely to overeat!

How the Nurse Advice Line Helps

A 63-year-old man who lives in a group home in Glendale used the L.A. Nurse Advice Line recently. He has a nervous condition and diabetes that limit his movement.

He says: “My heart was beating really fast the other day, and I called the nurse advice line. The nurse said to lie down and I did. The beating slowed and I felt better. I would have gone to the emergency room if I didn’t have the advice line.”

The phone number for your nurse advice line is on the back of your I.D. card. Here are the numbers just in case:

- Anthem Blue Cross 1-800-224-0336
- Care1st Health Plan 1-800-605-2556
- Kaiser Permanente 1-888-576-6225
- L.A. Care Health Plan 1-800-249-3619

New “Staying Healthy” Form

Soon there will be a new form you or your child will be asked to fill out when you see the doctor. It is called the Individual Health Education Behavioral Assessment Tool. We call it “Staying Healthy” for short. You may have seen this form in the past. This will be a new version.

The “Staying Healthy” tool asks questions about how you live your life, such as the types of food you eat, how much you exercise, and if you smoke. Some of the questions may be personal. You may choose not to answer any question if you don’t want to. Be honest and complete when filling out the form. It will help your doctor understand your needs better.

The form comes in different age groups, from birth through older adults. It also comes in many languages. Please fill out this form for yourself or your child the first time you see your doctor and then again as you or your child move into the next age group.

Ask your doctor about this form on your next visit.
Do you have questions about your health plan or your benefits? Call your health plan directly or call L.A. Care Health Plan.

Important Phone Numbers
Do you have questions about your health plan or your benefits? Call your health plan directly or call L.A. Care Health Plan.

What is Managed Care?

In L.A. County, there are two types of Medi-Cal: fee-for-service (also called regular Medi-Cal), or managed care. Your basic benefits stay the same with both.

Most people who get Medi-Cal in L.A. County must join a managed care health plan. Some can still choose between fee-for-service or managed care. The State of California now requires most people on Medi-Cal who are getting Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or are over 65 to join a managed care health plan.

Managed Care Medi-Cal

You chose a plan and a primary care physician (PCP). The health plan coordinates your care with your PCP, specialist, and hospital.

Fee-for-Service Medi-Cal

You have to find a PCP that accepts Medi-Cal and make all the arrangements on your own.

L.A. Care is a managed care health plan. As a member of L.A. Care, you get extra services such as:

- Free advice from a nurse at any time
- Help making health care appointments
- Free interpreters to help you during office visits with your PCP
- Materials in 10 languages and other formats such as large print, Braille, and audio
- Information about doctors’ offices, such as wheelchair access and elevators
- Helpful customer service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

For help, call L.A. Care Health Plan at 1-888-4LA CARE (1-888-452-2273) or the California Department of Managed Care Services at 1-888-466-2219.
EHRs Help Your Doctor Take Better Care of You

You may have heard of EHRs. These are electronic health records. They help your doctor keep all your health information in a computer instead of in paper files on a shelf. Over the next few years, you will hear that more L.A. County doctors will use EHRs in their offices. This will help them keep better track of your health and how to treat you.

EHRs also make it easy for doctors, nurses, and other health care staff to make sure you get the care you need to be healthy. Like when you need to get a flu shot or a mammogram. EHRs also let your doctor share data with other doctors, labs, and pharmacies. EHRs can also help you get office visits faster, get medicines refilled, and get referrals quicker, which means better service for you.

Join a RCAC!

L.A. Care is seeking persons with disabilities who would like to bring their voice to L.A. Care’s Board of Governors. They would volunteer to serve on a local Regional Community Advisory Committee (RCAC). They help guide L.A. Care’s programs for more than 1 million people in Los Angeles County. Call 1-888-522-2732 for more info.

Fast Food, Not Fat Food

It’s been a busy day. You’re tired. The last thing you want to do is cook dinner. The fast food drive-thru looks pretty good. But what about your health? Good news! You can enjoy fast food — without all the fat and calories. The secret is to choose wisely.

| Instead of . . . | Try this . . . | You Save... *
|------------------|----------------|----------------
| Double Patty Cheeseburger | Single Patty Hamburger, No Cheese | 490 calories 33 fat grams |
| Crispy Chicken Sandwich | Grilled Chicken Sandwich | 160 calories 13 fat grams |
| Large French Fries | Small French Fries | 270 calories 14 fat grams |
| Soda | Water, Unsweetened Iced Tea, Diet Soda | 310 calories 0 fat grams |
| Chocolate Shake | Fruit ‘n Yogurt Parfait | 1,000 calories 25 fat grams |
| Apple Pie | Apple Slices | 150 calories 13 fat grams |
| Bacon, Egg and Cheese Biscuit | English Muffin | 320 calories 24 fat grams |
| Ranch Dressing | Balsamic Vinaigrette | 135 calories 12.5 fat grams |
| Caramel Frappe | 1% Milk | 780 calories 26 fat grams |

* Too many calories and fat can make you weigh too much. Cut 3,500 calories a week to lose one pound. Limit fat to less than 50 grams a day to help weight loss.

L.A. Care offers FREE group healthy weight appointments. You can also talk to a health educator or take a community class at one of L.A. Care’s Family Resource Centers. Call L.A. Care Member Services at 1-888-839-9909 (TTY/TDD: 1-866-522-2731).
Learn About Your Coverage

Thank you for choosing L.A. Care Health Plan. Each year we send you information in the mail about how to use your health care benefits. This information is also on our Web site at www.lacare.org. Go to our Web site to find out about:

Basic information
• What benefits and services are covered
• What benefits and services are not covered
• How my health plan makes decisions about when new treatments will become benefits
• What care you can and cannot get when you are out of Los Angeles County or the L.A. Care network
• How to access care when you are out of Los Angeles County
• How to change or get care from your primary care physician (PCP)
• How to get information about doctors
• How to get a referral for special care or to go to the hospital
• What to do when you need care right away or when the office is closed
• What to do if you have an emergency
• Co-payments and other charges
• How to get prescriptions filled and other pharmacy program and updates
• What to do if you get a bill
• How to keep you and your family healthy guide

Special programs
• The Quality Improvement Program tells us how we plan to improve quality of care, safety and services for our members. It tells us how we measure our progress to meet and improve our goals and services and what we may need to change.
• Case management for members who have difficult medical problems
• Programs to better manage diseases like diabetes and/or asthma

How decisions are made about your care
• How our doctors and staff make decisions about your care based only on need and benefits. We do not encourage doctors to provide less care than you need and doctors are not paid to deny care.
• How to reach us if you want to know more about how decisions are made about your care
• How to appeal a decision about your care

Member issues
• Your rights and responsibilities as a health plan member
• How to complain when you are unhappy
• What to do if you are disenrolled from your plan
• How L.A. Care protects and uses your personal health information
• How to get help if you speak a different language

If you would like paper copies, please call us at 1-888-839-9909.

Identity Theft & You

Identity theft impacts Medicare and can lead to higher health care costs. Don’t let anybody steal your identity. You can do your part by looking out for fraud schemes such as:

• People using your Medicare or health plan number for getting money for care you never received
• People calling to ask for your Medicare or health plan numbers
• People going door to door to sell you health care items or services
• People giving you money to use a doctor you don’t know to get care you may not need

Never give out your Social Security, Medicare, health plan numbers, or banking info to someone you don’t know. Always check your plan statement to make sure the info is right. Know that free services DO NOT need you to give your plan or Medicare number to anyone.

If you suspect fraud, report it now by calling 1-877-7SAFERX (1-877-772-3379).
1. Always keep your I.D. card with you. Show your I.D. card when you:
   • Go to a doctor’s office
   • Go to the hospital
   • Need emergency services
   • Pick up a prescription

Don’t give your I.D. card to anyone else to use. If you lose or damage your I.D. card, call L.A. Care at 1-888-839-9909.

2. You have the right to receive service and information in a language or format you understand. If you need a FREE interpreter for a doctor’s visit, or member information in another language or format (like Braille, large print, or audio), call 1-888-839-9909 (TTY/TDD 1-866-522-2731).

3. You can talk to a nurse for free, any time day or night, 7 days a week. Check your I.D. card for the phone number. Nurse advice lines also provide pre-recorded information on many health topics. There is a list of these topics at the end of the Member Handbook we mailed to you.

4. Visit our website at www.lacare.org. You can:
   • Find a doctor
   • Learn about your benefits
   • Look into our health education services and Family Resource Center classes
   • Find out about your rights and responsibilities
   • File a complaint, called a “grievance”

5. Do you have questions? L.A. Care is here to help you get the care and service you need. Call our Member Services department at 1-888-839-9909 (TTY/TDD 1-866-522-2731) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (open holidays).

The ER Game
When should you go to the Emergency Room and when should you not? Check the best answer below. Then see how well you score.

1. Severe sprain to knee. □ Yes □ No
2. Important medicine runs out □ Yes □ No
3. Broken arm □ Yes □ No
4. Chest pain □ Yes □ No
5. Cut or sore that doesn’t heal □ Yes □ No
6. Sudden weakness or trouble talking □ Yes □ No
7. Sore throat □ Yes □ No
8. Bump on head that causes brief blackout □ Yes □ No
9. Burn on hand that raises a blister □ Yes □ No
10. Dog bite that bruises the skin but no bleeding □ Yes □ No

For more info, ask your doctor.

Score Yourself:

- 10-8 Correct: Excellent. You know how to use the ER wisely.
- 7-5 Correct: Average. Check your answers and try again later.
- 4-0 Correct: Low. Ask your doctor for more info.

ANSWERS TO ER GAME

1. No* 2. No* See your doctor before the medicine runs out.
3. Yes, there could be other problems.
4. No 5. No* Instead of the ER, first call the Nurse Advice Line or go to Urgent Care.
6. Yes, it may be a heart attack.
7. No* 8. Yes, it may be more serious.
9. No* 10. No*
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If you want the information contained in this newsletter in another language or in large print, Braille, or audio (cassette or CD) call L.A. Care at 1-888-839-9909 or TTY 1-866-LA-CARE1 (1-866-522-2731).

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

- Tips to Quit | pg. 2
- Fast Food, Not Fat Food | pg. 5
- What is Managed Care? | pg. 4
- Things to Remember | pg. 7

**SPRING 2013**

LA. Care

Health or wellness or prevention information

L.A. Care Health Plan
www.lacare.org

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