

For immediate distribution

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## **7 Tips for asthmatics in unpredictable weather**

Cold air, an increase of pollen in the atmosphere and sudden changes in the weather are par for the course during March and can adversely impact health for asthma sufferers. But people with the condition can act to lessen the symptoms and reduce the risk of attacks. Read on for some useful tips.

West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group is reminding people with asthma to stock up on any prescribed steroids, reliever and preventer inhalers, as well as cough and cold remedies. 90% of those with asthma say that colds and flu make their asthma symptoms worse, which can increase the risk of an asthma attack.

- 1) Ensure you have stocks of all prescribed asthma medications.** Make sure you have spare preventer and reliever inhalers and enough steroid medications if you take these. Avoid running out so that you are prepared in the event of an attack and to help control your symptoms longer term. And if you don't have to use your inhalers very often don't forget to check that they are in date.
- 2) Keep your medicine cabinet stocked with over the counter medication.** Cough and cold remedies should always be at hand as colds and flu can have a severe impact on asthmatics. Be sure to avoid any medications that might not be suitable for people with the condition.
- 3) Keep warm.** The weather might be brighter and warmer than previous months, but it can still be chilly so make sure you wrap up when outside. A snood, gaiter or a cosy scarf is still a must-have accessory this month.
- 4) Exercise indoors if it's particularly cold or if pollen levels are high.** Regular exercise keeps us all healthy and can reduce asthma symptoms, but it's best to avoid exercising outdoors in very cold weather and when pollen levels are high, especially if these are triggers for your asthma.
- 5) Check your filters.** Heating systems and car air filters help keep the air you breathe cleaner and reduce dust in the atmosphere. These should be changed regularly to avoid them becoming clogged and ineffective.

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**6) Keep dust at bay.** Regular cleaning and dusting at home will keep dust levels low and avoid the particles entering your lungs and causing inflammation which can lead to asthma attacks. Bed sheets and duvet covers are also prone to dust and mites, so it's a good idea to wash these in a hot wash once a week. You might need someone to help you with cleaning, if dust is a trigger for your asthma.

**7) Have an asthma action plan/review your plan.** You can download asthma action plans for adults and children at [www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk) and fill these in with your GP or asthma nurse. An action plan will help you to monitor and stay on top of your symptoms and know when to seek help for your condition. You should review your plan with your GP or asthma nurse at least once a year.

**Dr Rob Gerlis**, Chair of West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group said "Although the worst of the cold weather is hopefully behind us, March can be particularly problematic for asthmatics as changes in the weather and a sudden increase of pollen in the air can make life difficult. It's important to try to manage your symptoms as much as possible to avoid an asthma attack and taking medicines as prescribed by your doctor is important in aiding people with asthma to do this."

For more advice on staying well this winter visit [www.nhs.uk/staywell](http://www.nhs.uk/staywell).

**ENDS**

**Picture caption: Managing asthma symptoms**

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