

# WINTER WELLNESS



## A Message from our CEO

**My name is Sarah O'Connor and I am the CEO of the Asthma Society of Ireland.**

I hope that you find this Winter Wellness Support Pack to be helpful to you, your family and your wider asthma tribe. We have included a number of materials to help and support you this Winter.

I thank GSK Ireland for their support in printing and distributing this Winter Wellness Support Pack and I also thank Colet for telling us her story and helping us understand how important Winter Wellness has been in her asthma management journey. On behalf of the Asthma Society team, I thank you so much for your help and support since we were founded nearly 50 years ago. **I especially thank you for your engagement and help since the pandemic hit, when we have been reliant on donations from members of the public like yourself to survive as a charity.**

We have shared the Christmas Children's Activity booklet with you because we know through our services that this year has been particularly hard for children with asthma and their parents and carers. The booklet is designed to help a child to understand their asthma, to act as a conversation-starter, and to build their own supportive asthma tribe, so we can keep every child with asthma safe.

If you don't have a child with asthma in your family, please do share with someone who does this Christmas – one in ten children have asthma right now, and one in five children will experience it at some point in their childhood. **This could be one good deed you do this Christmas that makes a big difference to a child, and it could even save a child's life.**

In 2022, we plan to have a major focus on children with asthma. Children with asthma will be our Asthma Awareness Week campaign theme and we are also seeking donations and funding in 2022 to expand our Safe Schools programme.

I am asking you to consider supporting us by becoming an ongoing member of our asthma tribe, or by giving us a one-off gift using the donation form attached, or through our website or by phoning us. Your gift of €100 could help us make one school Asthma Safe – we can train a teacher to manage an asthma attack in their school and ensure that the school has an emergency inhaler available in case a child needs it.

Your gift of €500 could make four schools Asthma Safe, but could also provide 100 individual children with materials to boost their asthma awareness and to help their parents better understand how to manage their asthma.

Please do get in touch to update us with any change to your address or contact details or to let us know if you no longer wish to receive communications from the Asthma Society. We will make any updates necessary immediately.

**As a respiratory charity supporting patients throughout a global respiratory pandemic, our services have never been busier and we have never been more needed. We have also never been so hard-pressed financially to deliver our services with so few resources. We thank you for every effort you make to support people with asthma in Ireland.**

I am wishing you a happy and healthy Christmas (and Winter),

Yours, in appreciation,

Sarah O'Connor



asthma.ie

CHY no: 6100



SCAN ME TO  
**DONATE**  
GO TO  
[asthma.ie/donate](https://asthma.ie/donate)  
OR CALL  
**01 817 8886**

\* If you have experienced an asthma or respiratory bereavement (including relating to COVID-19), our thoughts and our hearts are with you and we hope that this Winter Wellness Support Pack does not cause you any additional distress. You can always feel free to get in touch to talk to us about your experience.

# WINTER WELLNESS

*A Message from a Member  
of our Nursing Team*

**My name is Ruth Morrow and I am a Respiratory Nurse Specialist at the Asthma Society of Ireland. One of the patient support services we provide is a nurse-led WhatsApp messaging service, which I run together with my colleague Sam.**

I am so aware of the challenges people with asthma face as we go through the Winter months, including children with asthma. Winter can be a very challenging time for both adults and children with asthma due to the cold and foggy weather, increased air pollution, and increased exposure to cold and flu viruses. This year, in particular, we are seeing adults and children with asthma hard-hit by respiratory infections and this is having a knock-on impact on their asthma management.

One of the most common questions we are asked at this time of year is about managing asthma during an infection or when you get a cold. Managing your triggers and talking to a healthcare professional about adjusting your medication can help greatly in preventing a flare up of your asthma.

Parents regularly contact us about their children's asthma or their child's wheeze – either on our Adviceline for a nurse appointment or through our WhatsApp messaging service. This can be a very worrying and confusing time for parents and we try to allay those fears and provide them with information so they can look after their child's asthma.

**Here are eight Winter-ready actions I encourage you to take – these might save your life:**

- 1. Complete your Asthma Action Plan with your GP, consultant or our asthma nurse team**
- 2. Make your Asthma Action Plan a part of your daily life - stick it on your fridge**
- 3. Take a photo of your Asthma Action Plan - save it on your phone for when you need it**
- 4. Keep the 5 Step Rule wallet card from this support pack with you and use the QR code to view the video – share it with your asthma tribe**
- 5. Use the symptom tracker to boost your understanding of how your symptoms flare – this can help you spot early if you are getting worse**
- 6. Sign up to be a (free) member of the Asthma Society or register for our e-newsletter to get regular seasonal hints and tips**
- 7. Talk to two friends and family members about your asthma and how it impacts on your life – build your own supportive asthma tribe!**
- 8. Send a message to our WhatsApp service to get ongoing support or phone our Adviceline for a nurse appointment**

It can be confusing to know how to use your inhaler correctly, especially if you have been prescribed different kinds of inhalers. Using WhatsApp, we can send you videos on how to use your inhalers and how to manage your asthma triggers. You can then save these or other key asthma management materials straight on to your phone so that you have them when you need them.

I can be contacted on the **WhatsApp messaging service at 086 059 0132.**

Wishing you a healthy and safe Winter ahead,

Yours sincerely,

**Ruth Morrow** - Respiratory Nurse Specialist





Angela (left) &  
me as children



13th December 2021

Dear Reader,

**“If you don’t look after your asthma, you will go the same way as your sister...” my consultant said.**

Those words haunted me during that hospital stay, my first since my older sister Angela had died from a sudden serious asthma attack just months earlier – her first ever.

I had never thought that I could die from asthma until I lost my sister to the illness in October 1993, even though I had been in and out of the Emergency Room myself every six weeks or so with repeated asthma attacks from the age of eleven.

That day, those words from the consultant hit me. I felt like an elephant had just stood on my chest. I realised how important my lungs were and what they had gone through to survive all those years of fighting for my breath – frequent Intensive Care visits, prolonged in-patient stays in hospital and even being ventilated to keep me alive on one occasion.

One thing I try to remember is: “Reach One. Teach One”. I want my story to reach out and help teach patients or carers how to live with asthma, so that asthma does not control their lives. **The Asthma Society “reach” and “teach” parents and carers every day but they need your help and your donations to continue that work.**

My big sister Angela was a social butterfly. She loved nothing better than a fun night out with her friends but that fatal night in October 1993 was to be her last party. It is still hard to write that sentence. While out playing laser tag as part of her birthday celebrations, she had a severe asthma attack from running around a smoke-filled room and she collapsed in the bathroom and died. She was only 26 years old.



Angela a few weeks  
before she died

In the years prior to Angela’s death, hospitals had been my second home and nursing staff had frequently acted as my carers. My parents had been forced to learn to spot the warning signs of my asthma, needing to identify when I was in big trouble, when I couldn’t breathe and when an ambulance was urgently needed.

After Angela died, leaving behind a devastated family and me to carry on as her little sister, the consultant’s words made it obvious to me. The doctor was right – I couldn’t “go the same way” as my sister, I had to change and learn for myself. It was my job to protect my lungs, rather than take them for granted. I found a new survival mode - understanding my own symptoms and triggers became like learning to fine-tune a grand piano.

As a family, we only wish that we had known about the Asthma Society back then. There are days when I do wonder about what that support could have done for Angela – maybe my sister would still be alive today if that help had been available to us.

continues overleaf...

**That is why I am asking you to give an ongoing or one-off gift to support the vital services provided by the Asthma Society. Their nursing team, their awareness-building and their work to advocate for improved asthma services is so important. They need our support, our donations and our voices as patients to stop asthma deaths in Ireland.**

My biggest asthma learning came from educating myself on how to know my own asthma triggers and how to identify the changes in my own lungs. Learning to recognise when I was deteriorating was key to getting my life back.

As a patient, it's harder to manage asthma triggers in Winter, but it's also the most important time of the year to be in charge of your asthma.

**The things that work for me in Winter - maybe you might find these useful too:**

- 1. I always take my preventative inhaler – every single day.** I tell myself this is the equivalent of keeping your lungs toned for an asthma patient.
- 2. I wrap up well to minimise cold air as a trigger and I'm particularly careful to protect my chest.** I put an extra layer under my jumper and cover my mouth with a scarf to warm up the cold air before it hits my lungs.
- 3. I don't socialise in houses that are smoky** and I ask people to smoke outside if they are coming to my home over the Christmas period.
- 4. I've always asked people to open windows to minimise the changes of catching a viral illness** - that's even more important now during the pandemic. Social distancing, hand-washing and wearing a mask are also key.
- 5. I watch out for seasonal triggers** – like festive pot pourri, scented candles, sometimes real Christmas trees can even trigger an attack for me.
- 6. I meditate. This really helps me chill out and keep a calm head.** Stress can be an asthma trigger so a calm mental oasis is key for Winter Wellness.
- 7. I think the advice that Ruth (the Asthma Society nurse) gives and the Top Ten Tips leaflet in this Winter Wellness Support Pack are brilliant. I'm taking them on for myself!**

All this Winter Wellness and asthma management initially seemed like work and then seemed like freedom. Getting medication right was fine-tuning a grand piano so it can play the right sound. Getting to know my own symptoms and my body's response to asthma triggers made the whole thing into a symphony.

When I created my bucket list before my asthma was controlled, I wanted to get on a helicopter. I wanted to fly a glider plane. I wanted to ride a horse. With the right self-management of my asthma in recent years, I was able to do all those. Because of that, approaching my 50s, I'm creating a whole new bucket list – I'm thinking the Camino in Spain, climbing up to the Blue Cross in a pilgrimage to Medjugorje and, for the craic, to zipline down the Vegas strip.

My sister Angela's parting gift to me was letting me know that I should get out there – just live every day of my life. I'd love my mantra of Reach One: Teach One to reach you as you read this – as a person with asthma or a carer to a person with asthma – you too can get the most out of life when asthma is controlled. Your first step to getting that control can start now, with this Winter Wellness Support Pack as your call to action.

The Asthma Society will be there for you on your asthma management journey, step by step, as they are for so many patients. **Please donate to support the work they do, that donation could help another patient to write a whole new bucket list, just like me.**

Yours Sincerely,

*Colet*



Asthma management has helped me feel on top of the world



Me aged 30 flying a small plane - one off the bucket list!



asthma.ie

CHY no: 6100



SCAN ME TO  
**DONATE**  
GO TO  
[asthma.ie/donate](https://asthma.ie/donate)  
OR CALL  
01 817 8886

ASTHMA ADVICELINE

**1800 44 54 64**

BEATING BREATHLESSNESS WHATSAPP

**086 059 0132**





# WINTER WELLNESS



## TOP TIPS FOR MANAGING ASTHMA



1 Know the **5 STEP RULE** for dealing with an asthma attack.



2 Take your **MEDICATIONS** as prescribed, even when you are well.



3 Use a written **ASTHMA ACTION PLAN** to manage your asthma.



4 Get an **ASTHMA REVIEW** and have your inhaler / spacer technique checked during the winter months.



5 Get your **FLU VACCINATION** from your GP or pharmacist.



6 **COLD AIR** can trigger asthma symptoms - wear a snood and wrap up when outside.



7 Eat a healthy **BALANCED DIET** and **EXERCISE REGULARLY**



8 **DO NOT SMOKE** and ask people not to smoke around you.



9 Make sure you can tell when your asthma is **GETTING WORSE** so you can quickly get help from your GP or asthma nurse.



10 Call our **FREE ADVICELINE** to arrange an asthma nurse appointment or message our nurse on **WHATSAPP**

asthma.ie



SCAN ME TO **DONATE**

asthma.ie/donate  
OR CALL 01 817 8886

ASTHMA ADVICELINE

**1800 44 54 64**

BEATING BREATHLESSNESS WHATSAPP

**086 059 0132**



CHY no: 6100

# SYMPTOMS OF AN ASTHMA ATTACK



Cough



Short breath



Wheeze



Tight Chest



Difficulty talking

Blue lips

or any combination of these

## 5 STEP RULE

How to deal with an asthma attack

If someone has an asthma attack:

- Do not leave them on their own.
- Extra puffs of reliever inhaler (usually blue) are safe.



**1** Sit up and stay calm  
Do not lie down



**2** Take slow steady breaths



**3** Take 1 puff of reliever inhaler usually blue every minute

People aged 6+ – up to 10 puffs in 10 mins  
Children under 6 – up to 6 puffs in 10 mins



**4** Call 999 or 112 if your symptoms do not improve after 10 minutes



**5** Repeat Step 3 if an ambulance has not arrived in 10 minutes

## TRIGGERS

THINGS THAT CAN SET ASTHMA OFF



Smoking



Animals



Exercise



Colds/Flu



Medicines



Feelings



Dust



Pollens, grass, trees



Cleaning products



Sprays



Mildew or mould



Foods & drinks



Hormones



Weather



Jobs

# SYMPTOMS OF AN ASTHMA ATTACK



Cough



Short breath



Wheeze



Tight Chest



Difficulty talking



Blue lips

or any combination of these

DONATE AT  
[asthma.ie](http://asthma.ie)

Follow us on



ASTHMA ADVICELINE

**1800 44 54 64**

BEATING BREATHLESSNESS WHATSAPP

**086 059 0132**



Call our

**FREE ADVICELINE**

to arrange an asthma  
nurse appointment or  
message our nurse on

**WHATSAPP**

Mon-Fri 9am-5pm



CHY no: 6100

# 5 STEP RULE

## How to deal with an asthma attack

Scan this QR to watch our 5 STEP RULE video



**Sit up and stay calm**  
Do not lie down



**Take slow steady breaths**



**Take 1 puff of reliever inhaler**  
usually blue **every minute**

People aged 6+ - up to 10 puffs in 10 mins  
Children under 6 - up to 6 puffs in 10 mins



**Call 999 or 112 if your symptoms**  
do not improve after 10 minutes



**Repeat Step 3 if an ambulance**  
has not arrived in 10 minutes

**If someone has an asthma attack:**

- Do not leave them on their own.
- Extra puffs of reliever inhaler (usually blue) are safe.

# SYMPTOM TRACKER

Example DAY

**MY SYMPTOMS**

Did your asthma wake you up last night?

Did you cough today?

Did you wheeze today?

Did your asthma affect your normal activity?

How are you feeling? 

**MY TREATMENT**

AM

PM

AM

PM

AM

PM

AM

PM

Write in your medicines here and record how many times you took them each day.

Example DAY

**MY SYMPTOMS**

Did your asthma wake you up last night?

Did you cough today?

Did you wheeze today?

Did your asthma affect your normal activity?

How are you feeling? 

**MY TREATMENT**

AM

PM

AM

PM

AM

PM

AM

PM

**WEEK 1** DATE \_\_\_\_\_

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN

**WEEK 2** DATE \_\_\_\_\_

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN

**WEEK 3** DATE \_\_\_\_\_

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN

**WEEK 4** DATE \_\_\_\_\_

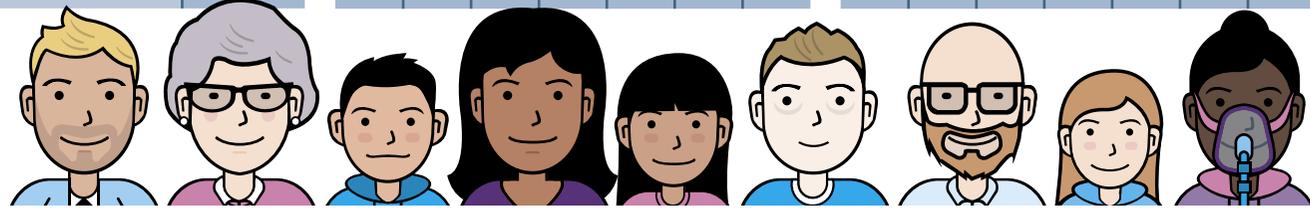
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN

**WEEK 5** DATE \_\_\_\_\_

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN

**WEEK 6** DATE \_\_\_\_\_

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN



## MY ASTHMA MEDICINE

### My daily controller medication

My controller inhaler is

Colour

My other controller medication is

Colour

My nasal treatment is

My allergy treatment is

### Why do I need controller medication?

My controller medication benefits my lungs by reducing inflammation, swelling and mucus.

**I need to take my controller every day even when I am well.**

### My reliever medications

My reliever inhaler is

Colour

### Why do I need reliever medication?

- ➔ My reliever works quickly to make breathing easier by opening up my airway.
- ➔ I will always carry my reliever inhaler with me.

My personal best peak flow (if over 6 years of age) is

### My asthma triggers are:

## MAKE YOUR ASTHMA ACTION PLAN WORK FOR YOU

- ➔ Put your Asthma Action Plan where you and your family can easily find it.
- ➔ Save a photo of your Asthma Action Plan on your phone or keep a copy in your bag or car.
- ➔ Share a copy of your Asthma Action Plan with family members, friends and care-givers.
- ➔ Check your Asthma Action Plan regularly.
- ➔ Always bring your Asthma Action Plan with you to healthcare appointments and Emergency Department visits.

**Remember to attend for an asthma review at least once a year and have your inhaler technique checked.**

## YOU CAN HELP YOUR ASTHMA BY:

- ➔ Staying active and taking exercise for at least 20 minutes each day
- ➔ Maintaining a healthy weight
- ➔ Quitting smoking and avoiding smoky environments. For help to quit smoking call the QUITline on 1800 201 203 or visit [www.quit.ie](http://www.quit.ie)



Clinical Strategy and Programmes Division



Self-management Support



[hse.ie/eng/health/hl/living/asthma](http://hse.ie/eng/health/hl/living/asthma)

Asthma Adviceline **1800 44 54 64**

Call Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm to arrange an appointment to speak to an Asthma Nurse Specialist

Email [reception@asthma.ie](mailto:reception@asthma.ie)

[asthma.ie](http://asthma.ie)



## MY ASTHMA ACTION PLAN

Date

Name

Next of kin

Next of kin's contact number

Emergency contact number

(for example GP or out-of-hours Doctor)

**An Asthma Action Plan is your personal guide to manage your asthma when it gets out of control.**

**It will help you to recognise asthma symptoms:**

**COUGH WHEEZE CHEST TIGHTNESS  
SHORTNESS OF BREATH**

**And provide you with information on what action to take.**

**This Asthma Action Plan is yours, so use it, don't lose it!**

[asthma.ie](http://asthma.ie)

# GREEN ZONE



## Everyday asthma care

### ASSESSMENT

#### My asthma is controlled:

- ➔ I have no cough, wheeze, shortness of breath or chest tightness
- ➔ I can exercise without asthma symptoms
- ➔ My asthma symptoms do not wake me at night
- ➔ I do not need to take days off school, college or work
- ➔ I use my reliever inhaler twice a week or less (over the age of 6 years)
- ➔ I use my reliever inhaler once a week or less (under the age 6 years)

My peak flow is between  and   
(80 – 100%) of my personal best

### ACTION

#### Controller inhaler

When my asthma is controlled I take my controller medication everyday.

Name	Colour
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Number of puffs in the morning	Number of puffs at night
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

I always rinse my mouth after I take my controller inhaler.

#### Reliever inhaler

I take my reliever inhaler if I wheeze, cough, have chest tightness or I am finding it difficult to breathe.

Name	Colour
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Number of puffs
<input type="text"/>

- ➔ I should always carry my reliever inhaler.
- ➔ I take two puffs of my reliever inhaler before exercise if needed.

When I am well, I also take my other medication.

I always use a spacer with my inhaler if I have one

# ORANGE ZONE



## When I am feeling unwell

### ASSESSMENT

- ➔ My asthma symptoms include one or all of the following: cough, wheeze, shortness of breath or chest tightness
- ➔ I have symptoms with exercise
- ➔ My asthma symptoms wake me at night
- ➔ I need to take days off school, college or work due to asthma symptoms
- ➔ I am taking my reliever inhaler more than twice a week (over the age of 6 years)
- ➔ I am taking my reliever inhaler more than once a week (under the age of 6 years)
- ➔ My peak flow is dropping
- ➔ I feel like I have a cold or flu

### ACTION

#### Controller inhaler

When I am feeling unwell I take my medication like this.

Name	Colour
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Number of puffs in the morning	Number of puffs at night
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

#### Reliever inhaler

Name	Colour
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Number of puffs
<input type="text"/>

- ➔ If I am not improving and I have been prescribed Prednisolone tablets (steroid tablets) to keep at home, I should start taking them. **Yes**  / **No**
- ➔ If I continue to feel unwell and I am not improving, or I am concerned, I contact the GP/ Nurse/ out-of-hours Doctor/Emergency Department.

I always use a spacer with my inhaler if I have one

# RED ZONE



## When I am having an asthma attack

### ASSESSMENT

- ➔ My asthma symptoms are getting worse and I have increased: cough, wheeze, shortness of breath or chest tightness
- ➔ My reliever inhaler gives little or no relief
- ➔ I find it difficult to talk or walk
- ➔ I find it difficult to breathe
- ➔ I have blue lips or fingernails
- ➔ My peak flow is dropping further
- ➔ The attack came on suddenly
- ➔ I am breathing fast and using my tummy and neck muscles

### ACTION

#### THIS IS AN EMERGENCY – ACT NOW

Follow the 5 steps below. If you are worried or not improving at any stage, CALL 999/112

1. Stay calm. Sit up straight – do not lie down.
2. Take slow steady breaths.
3. Take one puff of your reliever inhaler (blue) every minute. Use a spacer if available.
  - ➔ People **over 6 years** can take up to **10 puffs** in 10 minutes
  - ➔ Children **under 6 years** can take up to **6 puffs** in 10 minutes
4. Call 112 or 999 if your symptoms do not improve after 10 minutes
5. Repeat **step 3** if an ambulance has not arrived in 10 minutes

It is safe to take additional puffs of your blue inhaler during an acute asthma attack.

I always use a spacer with my inhaler if I have one