

DEFINE *your* ASTHMA

A GUIDE ON HOW TO HELP PEOPLE WITH SEVERE ASTHMA

Part of the Define your Asthma campaign

*"The best thing you can do
is support them and be well
prepared for when an attack
happens, so they feel reassured
that you are there for them."
(Severe asthma specialist,
Professor Wolfgang)*



DO YOU KNOW WHAT SEVERE ASTHMA IS?

First things first, severe asthma isn't just really bad asthma. It's a life-threatening condition in itself. Some people with severe asthma have to change their daily lives, even if they might not want that. They often have attacks more than once a year. These attacks, which can also be called "flare-ups" often need to be treated with steroids. It can even be necessary to go to the hospital sometimes.

In 2020, we sent a survey to people around the world who are living with severe asthma and found out that:

49%

... feel that asthma controls their life

43%

... feel afraid of the side effects of their asthma medication

39%

... said severe asthma means that they never know how they will be feeling tomorrow

HOW CAN YOU HELP A FRIEND, FAMILY MEMBER OR COLLEAGUE LIVING WITH SEVERE ASTHMA?

Our survey highlighted some of the ways severe asthma can impact people's daily lives:

52%

... said they could not walk upstairs without becoming short of breath

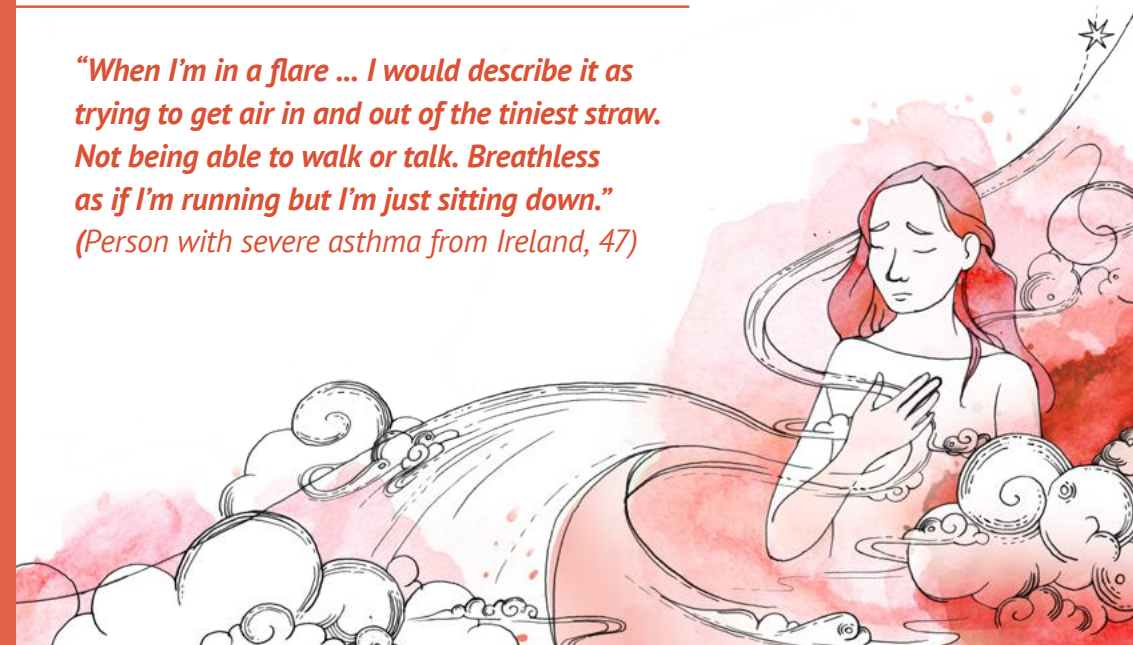
45%

... said they could not do housework

29%

... said they needed help from other people

*"When I'm in a flare ... I would describe it as trying to get air in and out of the tiniest straw. Not being able to walk or talk. Breathless as if I'm running but I'm just sitting down."
(Person with severe asthma from Ireland, 47)*



TOP TIPS FOR OFFERING SUPPORT

START WITH A QUESTION...

Ask your friend or loved one how you can support them. Some people will need help with lots of things. For others, carrying their shopping for them may be enough.



STEPS TO BUILD ON THAT FOUNDATION...

In our survey, we asked severe asthma patients what would help them to better overcome their daily challenges. We have summarised what they told us.

Here are five practical STEPS to help you help people with severe asthma:

S Symptoms.
Ask what his or her main symptoms are and how the symptoms change. Not everyone has the same symptoms and some symptoms come and go.

T Triggers.
What can trigger an asthma attack or flare-up? Whenever you plan an activity, think about how it will impact them – is the pollen count high, will there be allergens such as animals, how's the weather?

E Emergency.
Ask what you can do to help in case of an emergency. People with severe asthma are often unable to talk during an attack, so make sure you know where their medication is. Also, find out how to know when it's time to go to hospital.

P Plan.
What activities can you do together that will be good for them? Short walks, yoga, journaling and mindfulness are just some of the things that help people with severe asthma manage symptoms. And watch your speed, take things slower on bad days and take regular breaks when you go shopping or walking.

S Step in.
Sometimes, the best way to give support is by doing tasks for them. This way, your friend or loved one has less stress when their symptoms are bad or when they're recovering from a flare-up. Even doing little things like carrying their shopping bag home for them or helping with housework can help people with severe asthma a lot in difficult times.

***And the most important tip of all:
Talk to your friend or loved one when
you think he or she should speak to
a doctor about their severe asthma.***



HOW TO START THAT IMPORTANT CONVERSATION

Perhaps the best support you can give someone with severe asthma is to encourage them to see a doctor when you notice that their asthma is getting worse. Starting these conversations can feel a little...uneasy.

SO, HERE'S SOME ADVICE TO HELP YOU GET THAT CONVERSATION STARTED:

- 01** Choose the right moment when they will be open to a talk. Make sure that they are feeling calm and that nothing will distract your conversation.
- 02** If you have experience of severe asthma yourself – use it. Or if you haven't, read what other people with severe asthma have to say. If you are able to understand or relate, that will make your person feel like they aren't alone.
- 03** Present your evidence – explain what you've noticed. For example, is your friend or loved one feeling more tired than usual? Be clear and practical.
- 04** Accept that the final decision to see a doctor will not be yours. Your friend or loved one will have to decide for themselves.



Be aware of the signs that your friend or loved one might soon have an asthma attack. You can [download a checklist here](#).

We hope this guide helps you to support the people in your life with this challenging condition.

This guide has been translated into French, German, Italian, Portuguese (Brazilian), Slovenian, Spanish.

Please contact your local patient organisation, or GAAPP, for a copy in your preferred language.

Find your local patient organisation by visiting:
<https://gaapp.org/member-organizations/>

For more information about Define Your Asthma and to download more resources, please visit:
<https://gaapp.org/define-your-asthma/>

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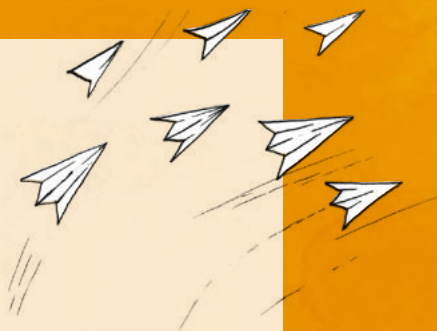
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This guide was developed using insights obtained from an online survey of adults (aged 18+) who said at least one sign from the PULSAR checklist applied to them. Fielded June – August 2020 by **Pegasus** on behalf of GAAPP.

Base size of respondents for quantitative data (in all but the 2 instances detailed below): n=128.

Base size of respondents who are employed: n=86.

Base size of respondents who take oral steroids for their severe asthma: n=102.





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