

# ***BETter Living ...***

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## **Do You Have Trouble Breathing?**

I know I do. I have battled a lifelong chronic illness, called asthma for many years. Asthma affects 22.6 million Americans. Common symptoms include: wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness, and coughing. May 5 is World Asthma Day and the month of May is National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month.

You may be asking yourself what triggers asthma symptoms. Mold, dust mites, secondhand smoke, pet dander, some foods and air pollutants can all be found in homes, schools, and offices. These different triggers can cause an asthma attack where the bronchial tubes swell and limit the amount of air that can go in and out of the lungs.

Through correct asthma management, anyone who has this chronic illness can still live a fulfilling and successful life. When your asthma is managed correctly, you can breathe easier, be active, sleep well, and reduce your chance of a hospital visit. You can work with your healthcare provider to design an Asthma Action Plan (AAP).

The AAP will include steps to control your asthma. There are long-term control as well as short-term quick relief medications. The long-term medications will reduce the airway inflammation and will help prevent symptoms.

Here are 7 steps to help reduce the chance of an asthma attack:

- Do not allow smoking in your home or car
- Dust and clean your home regularly
- Clean up mold and fix water leaks
- Wash sheets and blankets weekly in hot water
- Use allergen-proof mattress and pillow covers
- Keep pets out of the bedroom and off soft furniture
- Control pests – close up cracks and crevices and seal leaks

The most important thing to remember is that you can control your asthma and live a successful life. I love to play different sports and I am currently in Footloose at the Columbian Theatre, where I am dancing, which really works my lungs.

For more information, please visit: [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) or you can contact the Extension Office: (785) 765-3821.