

Let's Talk Asthma: A Conversation Guide

Severe asthma is a complex disease, but it shouldn't define who you are. Talking about your asthma can help you manage it, so you can keep being you. For any scenario where your asthma may interfere with an activity or your daily routine, use this guide to help navigate your conversations. It can be hard to explain how asthma interferes with 'normal' life, but these important conversations are a critical part of managing your disease.

START HERE

Asthma is a chronic respiratory disease that causes inflammation and narrowing of the airways which make it hard to breathe. Get the conversation started with these three tips.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

No one knows your asthma like you do. Detailing your personal history and severity is the first step to educating those around you.

MENTION YOUR TRIGGERS

Irritants like smoke and dust, or allergens such as pet dander and mold can trigger asthma. Explain your unique triggers so others can take steps to help avoid exposure.

ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF

Have frequent and honest conversations to let people know how they can best support you. Together you can work to find solutions and help minimize disruptions.

AT HOME

Even at home, there are situations where it's important for you to set boundaries in order to minimize disruptions to your life. Your guests, roommates, or even your family may not fully grasp the severity of your asthma or the living environment you need to properly manage your condition. Having a conversation about your asthma can help them understand, so that you can keep your home healthy.

Your aunt insists on visiting with Murph, her bearded collie.



"I love the videos you send me of him, but Murph needs to stay home. With my asthma, I would spend the whole visit struggling to breathe, instead of enjoying time with you."

Your roommate doesn't understand why moving your inhaler is a "big deal."



"It might seem like a little thing, but when you're cleaning, please don't move my inhaler. It's important that I always know where to find it."

AT WORK

Communicating with coworkers and managers about your asthma is important to helping you manage your asthma at work. Oftentimes, a colleague may not be aware of your condition at all, much less the irritants and allergens you may have to avoid. Informing people on what can cause an asthma flare-up is a first step to reducing exposure to triggers, while minimizing disruptions to your work day.

Your boss is worried about you travelling during allergy season.



"I appreciate your concern about ragweed season, but I'm excited for this presentation — and managing my asthma won't be a problem."

Your coworker recently started wearing a very strong-smelling perfume.



"I'm sorry to ask you this, but I'm really sensitive to scents — to the point where it triggers asthma flare ups. I'd really appreciate it if you could avoid using perfume at work."

OUT AND ABOUT

You can't always control your surroundings, but you can communicate how to pivot plans to suit your unique needs when it comes to your asthma. Instead of focusing on the ways asthma may restrict your activities, try focusing on what you can manage. Having a conversation about your asthma can reduce your exposure to triggers and lead to a better understanding.

Bailing on game night last minute due to your symptoms.



"I can't make it tonight. My asthma is flaring up. I'll make it up to you though! Next week will be twice as fun."

It's date night and your partner is worried about the concert's smoke machines.



"I love that you're thinking about my asthma. Let's contact the venue and ask. If they're not using smoke machines, I don't see any reason why we can't go."

This guide is intended to be used as a starting place for honest conversations. It's important to feel empowered to speak up so you can manage your disease and be yourself — in all situations.

For asthma-related resources, educational information and tools, visit [BreakTheCycle.com](https://www.breakthecycle.com).