

# Achieve

A Newsletter  
for AvMed  
Members

## ▶ YOUR HEALTHIEST LIFE WITH ASTHMA

### 4 essential health checks to get this year

**G**et a head start on the new year by scheduling these appointments to help you manage your asthma.

#### 1. Primary care visits

Asthma management requires teamwork with your primary care provider (PCP). "Regular checkups ensure that your treatment plan is effective and gets adjusted as needed," says John Sosa, M.D., a family physician based in Tampa, Florida. Besides a physical exam, your PCP will review and update your action plan and medications.

Another time to check in with your PCP? After an emergency room or hospital visit. Follow up with your PCP within seven days of going back home.

#### 2. Breathing tests

Several breathing tests can check how well your lungs are functioning, says Dr. Sosa. Your PCP may order one or more of these tests:

- **Spirometry:** Measures how much air you breathe in and out
- **Exhaled nitric oxide test:** Measures nitric oxide in your breath, which can indicate inflammation
- **Peak expiratory flow (PEF) monitoring:** Measures how quickly you exhale

#### 3. Blood work and allergy testing

Blood tests can help monitor

whether your asthma treatment is working.

Your PCP may also recommend allergy testing. "Allergy tests like skin prick or blood tests can pinpoint specific allergens that may exacerbate asthma symptoms," says Dr. Sosa.

#### 4. Dental exam

Certain asthma medications can increase your risk of cavities and other dental problems. Regular checkups can catch them early and help keep your teeth intact.



## Ask the Asthma Doctor

### Q How can I figure out what triggers my child's asthma?

**A** An asthma trigger is anything that can cause irritation in the lungs. Knowing your child's specific triggers can help you avoid them and prevent flare-ups. Some common triggers include secondhand smoke, pets, products with strong smells, dust mites, and colds.

To figure out your child's triggers, take note when you notice an uptick in symptoms, including what was happening at the time. "For example, you might notice some asthma every time your daughter is near the dog. Or when she goes to Auntie's house where they all smoke. Or maybe every time the weather changes in a particular way," says



Thesia Gambon, M.D. She's a pediatrician and president of the Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Look for other clues like: What was the weather like? What did he or she eat recently? Was there a strong smell from cleaning products or perfume? Details like these can help you pinpoint the problem.

Talk to your child's teachers

and caregivers, too, to see if they've noticed any connections between your child's surroundings and his or her symptoms.

Allergy testing can also help pinpoint potential triggers. "Once your child is around 2 years or older, we can do blood testing to look for allergens," says Dr. Gambon. Talk to your child's doctor if you suspect he or she might have an allergy.

### Case Manager Spotlight

**Latricia Campbell** has been a Disease Management Case Manager with AvMed for two years.

"I enjoy being a Case Manager because I am able to assist our Members and make a difference in their wellbeing."



**To reach us, please call 1-833-609-0735.**



## Healthy Eating Made Simple

Elizabeth Ferrer, R.D., AvMed's Registered Dietitian, shares her favorite tips for happier, healthier meals — without feeling deprived.

### Save time and money with these go-to healthy foods



**C**onvenience foods often get a bad rap. You may think they're less healthy. Or they come with a higher price tag. But there are lots of packaged foods that hit the sweet spot: They're nutritious, low-cost, and easy. Here are some of my favorites:

**Greek yogurt:** Protein is often the most expensive part of your diet. But Greek yogurt is a great low-cost option that provides about 12 to 15 grams of protein

per serving. Individual cups are convenient for a grab-and-go breakfast.

**Peanut butter:** Another low-cost protein, peanut butter is also packed with good-for-you fats that will keep you full and satisfied. Other nut butters, like almond and cashew, are trendy, but they aren't any healthier. Save money by sticking with old-fashioned peanut butter.

**Bananas:** Whole fruits, like bananas, aren't technically

packaged foods, but they're just as convenient! And at about 25 cents apiece, you can't beat the price. Keep them on hand for breakfast, snacks, or an easy addition to a meal.

#### **Precooked grains:**

Whole grains are better for your health, but they take a long time to cook. Plain, precooked grains, like brown rice and quinoa, are a great shortcut without sacrificing nutrition.

Remember, when shopping for packaged foods, always check nutrition labels and compare prices. Watch out for sodium and added sugars, which can be higher in packaged foods. And you don't have to be brand loyal — choose whichever product has the lowest price with similar nutrients and ingredients.

#### **Unencrypted email makes it easier to communicate with your case manager!**

To opt in, scan the QR code with your phone. Log in or register to the member portal and select "Set My Preferences."





## Recipe



## Salsa rice and beans

Serves 6 | Prep time: 40 minutes

This is a great recipe to have on hand for busy weekdays. Leftovers are also delicious topped with a fried egg.

### Ingredients

- 1 cup brown rice
  - 1 (15-ounce) can kidney beans, drained and rinsed
  - $\frac{3}{4}$  cup jarred salsa
  - 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups vegetable broth
- Optional for garnish: finely chopped fresh cilantro or parsley

### Instructions:

1. Combine rice, beans, salsa, and broth in a 3- to 4-quart saucepan; bring mixture to a boil.
2. Cover, reduce heat to low, and gently simmer until rice is cooked through, about 40 minutes. Remove lid and fluff with a fork. Serve with extra salsa and chopped herbs, if desired.

### Nutrition facts

Calories 175 | Fat 1g (Sat Fat 0g) | Cholesterol 0mg | Sodium 35mg | Carbs 35g | Fiber 4g | Sugar 2g (inc. 0g Added Sugar) | Protein 6g | Vit D 0 $\mu$ g | Calcium 35mg | Iron 1mg | Potassium 295mg