



HEALTH AWARENESS

Tips On Managing Your Asthma

(NAPSA)—For the one in 15 Americans living with asthma, the key to living well is managing the disease, says the National Consumers League (NCL), the nation's oldest consumer advocacy organization. Results of a survey, commissioned by the NCL and conducted by Harris Interactive, show that asthma patients often are not choosing an informed and proactive approach to their disease.

According to the NCL survey, one in six adult sufferers (17 percent) does not have a treatment plan for his or her asthma. And many people with asthma feel alone or anxious about their condition, making partnering with their health care provider even more important.

Asthma sufferers should sit down with their health care provider to make a treatment plan, which should include information on what they should do when asthma symptoms begin.

It's also important for sufferers to learn about their asthma medications—what they are, what they do and when they should be taken. According to the NCL survey, 38 percent, about four in 10 adult sufferers, do not understand asthma medication categories. And some misuse their medications—taking more or less than prescribed by their doctor. Among survey respondents who reported taking more than the indicated dose of their inhaler medication, 21 percent of them reported not reading their medication's instructions.

Asthma sufferers should monitor their asthma by keeping an asthma diary of symptoms and treatments and see their health care provider at least once a year. They should work with their health care provider to find the



Asthma sufferers will breathe easier when they discuss a treatment plan with their health care provider.

things that trigger their asthma flare-ups. Triggers may include dust mites, head colds, tobacco smoke, dry air, exercise and certain ingredients in foods.

The next step is to make lifestyle changes to reduce the occurrence, intensity or duration of asthma triggers. The NCL survey found that most asthma patients who made at least one lifestyle change reported that their asthma improved. Yet, 42 percent of the survey respondents reported that they have received little or no information at all about lifestyle changes that could impact their asthma condition.

When asthma sufferers partner with a health care provider, follow a treatment plan and monitor their condition, their asthma will be easier to control and will likely result in fewer and less severe asthma flare-ups.

NCL's brochure, "Live Well with Asthma," and Web site, www.nclnet.org/asthma, provide more information about the NCL survey and tips for understanding asthma.