

MADDIE: My name is Maddie, I'm 18 and I was diagnosed with asthma when I was three. When I was younger, my asthma was really hard on me. I was in and out of the hospital. It was kind of a struggle for me because I didn't really know a lot about it, what was going on, but I knew that it was hard for me to breathe.

JANET: I'm Janet, and I'm Maddie's mother. For me, it was overwhelming when Madelyn was diagnosed with asthma. I had to educate myself about a lot of things that I was completely unfamiliar with.

SYMPTOMS

MADDIE: When I have an asthma attack I get really wheezy, my chest gets really tight, my shoulders will raise because it gets more difficult for me to breathe. The key to it is knowing how your body works.

TRIGGERS

MADDIE: Some things that trigger my asthma are molds, actions – so anything related to sports or running, pollen, dog or cat hair, dust bunnies, dust, anything like that. Some of the bad times of the year for me are fall and the beginning of winter, probably around the first snowfall, because of all the mold, the leaves are falling and it's starting to get a little more cold and musty outside.

PEAK FLOW METER

MADDIE: I use the peak flow meter to help monitor my asthma. A peak flow meter measures air flowing out of the lungs and how well a person's asthma is under control. Peak flow zones are based on the traffic light concept. Red means danger, yellow means caution and green means that you're safe.

JANET: The peak flow meter was helpful for me to know when things were getting out of hand. If I felt that the medication and the fast-acting inhaler wasn't doing its job and that we might need to go to some other action.

ACTION PLAN

MADDIE: For me, my asthma has been really well controlled as I got older and I think that's because of my asthma action plan. The plan itself is a sheet of paper that has the three steps written out. Same thing as the peak flow meter, it goes on a red, yellow, green system. It really lays out what you should be feeling in each stage and how you should prevent each one and how you should deal with it as you go.

MEDICATION (1:59)

MADDIE: Right now, I take a preventative medication in the morning. If I feel an asthma attack coming on, then I'll use my rescue inhaler. My rescue inhaler always works for me. I mean, I know when I'm getting really tight or if I'm having an asthma attack. That's what I'll go to right away.

STAYING ACTIVE (2:16)

MADDIE: Physical activity is one of my triggers, but my doctor has always encouraged me to play sports. I love staying active and I don't really think that my asthma prevents me from staying active as long as I control it the right way.

JANET: I'm impressed the way Maddie has handled her asthma. She is very aware she has asthma and she is very aware of her body.

MADDIE: It's not something that bothers me or kind of gets in the way. It's just a normal part of my life that I know that I need to be conscious of. I think it's almost helped me be more conscious of my body in what I do and don't need in terms of my asthma.