

Rating Asthma Booklets

“Asthma self management education is essential to provide patients with the skills necessary to control asthma and improve outcomes.”¹ Effective teaching will save time and improve your patient’s understanding during the visit and beyond. Your teaching will be easier if you use an effective asthma booklet everywhere patients are waiting to be seen or need to be educated: in the waiting room, exam room, ER, hospital ward, pharmacy, in group sessions and at home. A booklet is superior to a single page handout because most patients are ready to learn more about their illness.

The 2007 NHLBI Guidelines (EPR-3) does not tell how to choose an asthma booklet. However, ten independent asthma experts agreed that that patients need knowledge in ten basic areas in order to achieve optimal asthma control.² Each of these areas has three parts. Use the chart (Fig, 1) to compare booklets that you are considering for your practice. Score 3 if only the first part of an area is present. Score 6 if the first two parts are covered. Score 10 only if all three parts are covered.

An effective booklet will score at least 90 points. Of the more than more than 30 booklets I have rated, only *One Minute Asthma* (OMA) scored more than 49. You can use the chart below to compare booklets that you are considering for your practice.

Patients who read the inside front cover of OMA will learn how well they could feel when their asthma is well controlled. These patients will expect their providers to work with then to achieve good control. As a result, their need for emergency care and hospitalizations will drop.

Most free or cheap booklets will force your staff to spend their valuable time teaching basic information. A good booklet will pay for itself many times over in staff time saved and improved asthma control (reduced costs for ER and hospital care).

¹ Expert Panel Report – 3 Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma. NIH Publication, Bethesda, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; National Institutes of Health; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; National Asthma Education and Prevention Program, 2007. P. 93.

² Plaut, TF. Basic Elements of Education for Childhood Asthma, *American Journal of Asthma & Allergy for Pediatricians* 1991; 4:220-222.

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The top score for each item is 10. It requires that items 3 and 6 are also present. The score for an area is reduced to 0 if there is a error. A complete and comprehensive asthma booklet will earn a total score over 90.

SETS PROPER EXPECTATIONS FOR WELL CONTROLLED ASTHMA

- 3 Fully active
- 6 Symptoms 2 days a week or less
- 10 Wake 2 times a month or less

DESCRIBES SIGNS OF ASTHMA

- 3 Cough, wheeze, retractions and increased respiratory rate
- 6 Scores each sign
- 10 Lists emergency signs

DISCUSSES TRIGGERS

- 3 Defines a trigger
- 6 Lists pollution, allergen, viral, cold air, exercise
- 10 Discusses avoidance and that effects of triggers add up

EXPLAINS PEAK FLOW MONITORING

- 3 Recommends home use
- 6 Provides instructions
- 10 Explains peak flow zone

DESCRIBES ASTHMA MEDICINES

- 3 Presents concepts of quick relief and controller medicines
- 6 Presents good and bad effects of inhaled steroids, leukotriene modifiers, short and long acting beta-agonists and oral steroids
- 10 Lists generic and brand names of medicines

EXPLAINS DEVICES FOR INHALING ASTHMA MEDICINES

- 3 Describes use of a metered dose inhaler, holding chamber, holding chamber with mask, dry powder inhaler, compressor driven nebulizer
- 6 Gives proper instructions for four of five devices
- 10 Gives proper instructions for all five devices

EXPLAINS THE ASTHMA REACTION

- 3 Inflammation and bronchoconstriction
- 6 Accurate illustration
- 10 Hyper-reactivity

PRESENTS AN ASTHMA DIARY

- 3 Sample diary
- 6 Displays peak flow zones graphically
- 10 Tracks peak flow, medicines, asthma signs and triggers

PRESENTS AN ASTHMA ACTION PLAN

- 3 Plan shows asthma care zones
- 6 Presents clear example of zone management
- 10 Covers daily and emergency asthma situations

TELLS HOW TO CHOOSE A PROVIDER

- 3 Gives printed instructions
- 6 Observes use of all devices prescribed
- 10 Checks air flow (peak flow, FEV₁ or PFT) at each visit

Title Publisher Publication Date	<i>One Minute Asthma</i> ³ Pedipress, Inc. 2008		
Expectations	10		
Signs	10		
Triggers	10		
Peak Flow	10		
Medicines	10		
Devices	10		
Asthma Reaction	10		
Diary	10		
Action Plan	10		
Choice	10		
Total Score	100		
Reading Level	5		
Languages	English, Spanish		

³ Plaut, TF, *One Minute Asthma: What You Need to Know*, 8th edition, Pedipress, Inc., 2008. www.pedipress.com