

# Memorandum

**To:** Gold Coast Health Plan Primary Care Providers

**From:** Nancy Wharfield, M.D., Chief Medical Officer  
Kim Timmerman, MHA, CPHQ, Director of Quality Improvement

**Re:** **Asthma Management During COVID-19**

**Date:** May 20, 2020

Due to the higher risk of complications from COVID-19 for patients with asthma, the state Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) released the following reminders of best practices and resources when treating patients with persistent asthma.

## Telehealth and Medications

- **Outreach:** Consider making outreach calls or sending letters to patients with asthma to verify they have access to medications and are adhering to controller medication recommendations.
- **Online Medication Availability:** Consider online ordering for members and informing them of its availability.
- **Refills:** Consider use of automatic refills and adjust refill limits.
- **Medication Delivery:** Consider home or mail delivery to members.
- **Telehealth Updates:** Review the DHCS [telehealth](#) guidelines and virtual communication guidance.

## Health Resources for Patients:

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**
  - [Know How to Use Your Asthma Inhaler:](#) Proper use of asthma inhalers.
  - [Taking Care of Your Emotional Health:](#) Stress management tips.
  - [What You Can Do:](#) How to avoid getting sick during COVID-19.
- **California Department of Public Health (CDPH)**
  - [Asthma QuickTake: Medications:](#) Asthma control feedback.

## Total Asthma Medication Ratio (AMR)

Especially during times of high-risk, it is important that patients with persistent asthma are adhering to the recommended asthma medication regimens. The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) recommends that patients with asthma have a prescribed asthma medication regimen that includes a higher ratio of controller medications to total asthma medications (controller and reliever) to appropriately control asthma. In a study conducted at the Medical University of South Carolina, an AMR below 0.5 nearly doubled the risk of an asthma-related hospitalization or emergency department visit in the subsequent three months. Outreach is a proactive method to connect with high-risk patients.

Thank you for continuing to serve our community and protecting patients during this difficult time. For more information, contact the Quality Improvement Department at [QualityImprovement@goldchp.org](mailto:QualityImprovement@goldchp.org).