



# PBMs HELP PATIENTS WITH ASTHMA BREATHE EASIER

Asthma is a long-term respiratory disease that causes inflammation and swelling in the airways. **Twenty-Five million Americans, 1 in every 13 people, live with asthma**, a number that has been steadily increasing since the 1980s. The burden of asthma falls disproportionately on racial and ethnic minorities. Asthma is the leading chronic disease in children, and black children are nearly three times more likely to have asthma than white children.

**Asthma costs the U.S. over \$50 billion a year in medical costs.** The average person with asthma pays over \$3,000 more for medical costs annually than those who do not have asthma. Pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) help to reduce that cost by working to lower the price of drugs, including asthma drugs, and ensuring patients have appropriate access.

**Although there is no cure for asthma, there are different prescription drugs used to control it. The four major types of asthma medications and treatments are:<sup>1</sup>**

1

### Long-term asthma control medications:

These are taken regularly to control chronic symptoms and prevent asthma attacks.

2

### Quick-relief medications:

These are taken as needed for rapid relief of symptoms like an asthma attack.

3

### Allergy-induced asthma medications:

These are taken regularly to reduce sensitivity to allergy-causing substances.

4

### Biologics:

These are taken with control medicines to stop underlying biological responses that cause inflammation in the lungs.

**PBMs want patients to stay healthy and avoid emergencies, so PBMs offer programs to help people living with asthma access their medications and lead healthier lives.**



### Zero or Low Cost Sharing

Many PBMs include asthma medications on lists of drugs for preventative treatment for which patients pay either no cost sharing or bypass their deductible and pay only their cost sharing.<sup>2</sup>



### Medication Review with Claims Data

Using claims data, PBMs monitor whether patients are on the appropriate asthma medications, reach out to patients and provide educational materials or counseling if needed.<sup>3</sup>



### Promoting Adherence Using Digital Therapies

Some PBMs track asthma patients' adherence by sending at-risk patients a device to attach to the top of their inhalers. That device is then linked to the patients' phones, which allows usage and dosage information to be sent to their PBMs.<sup>3</sup>

Asthma Information Source: [The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America](#)

1 Mayo Clinic. "Asthma medications: Know your options."

2 IRS. "IRS expands list of preventive care for HSA participants to include certain care for chronic conditions." 2019.

3 RTI International. "Expanding Awareness and Knowledge of the Value of Pharmacy Benefit Manager Clinical Programs." Unreleased, 2021.