



MANAGING YOUR SEVERE EOSINOPHILIC ASTHMA

Lifestyle tips to manage your disease in a social setting

Sharing your journey with severe eosinophilic asthma may elicit a variety of feelings and emotions. Talking to friends and family in a safe, comfortable environment can help you get the support and understanding you need to best cope with your daily asthma symptoms.

This brochure aims to provide practical guidance and lifestyle tips to help you manage the symptoms of your disease in a variety of social settings.



This brochure is divided into five sections, providing lifestyle tips that could help you manage the symptoms of severe eosinophilic asthma in social situations:

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Building your severe eosinophilic asthma support network

We all need people we can turn to for support when life gets challenging. The strongest support networks include different types of people, able to help in different ways, at different times. Building a strong asthma support network may help you to manage the physical and emotional symptoms related to your disease. These lifestyle tips may help you feel more supported in managing the symptoms of your severe eosinophilic asthma.

Interact with close friends and family

The people who know you best can be a great source of practical and emotional support. Close friends and family who are aware of your condition can support you in a variety of ways, such as assisting in day-to-day tasks, accompanying you to appointments or simply listening to your worries on a tough day.

Explore your wider social circle

It can also be helpful to look to your wider group of friends and relatives for support. For instance, you may learn of someone else who is struggling with a similar situation. Sharing your coping mechanisms can foster a sense of belonging and can help generate new ideas for both of you to manage the symptoms of your disease.

Consult your healthcare team

If you have any concerns about your severe eosinophilic asthma or treatment, speak to your doctor. You may also have questions about side effects related to your condition. For example, if you have a troublesome symptom or side effect that becomes bad enough to interfere with your daily activities, you are advised to consult your doctor. Remember that they care about you, not just your asthma.

You are advised to consult your doctor if you are worried about your asthma symptoms, treatment options, medications or their side effects.



Building your severe eosinophilic asthma support network

Take advantage of your Connect360° Program team

You may have been given the option to receive personal support by telephone from the Connect360° Program team.

The Connect360° Program team can support you with any questions or concerns you may have about your severe eosinophilic asthma or treatment and recommend additional resources.

Call the Connect360° Program helpline at 1-833-360-CONNECT (833-360-2666) to find out more.

Join online communities

Online forums offered by asthma charities and online health communities serve as a safe platform to connect with other individuals with chronic conditions. You can post your own questions, find out what others are going through and comment on their posts. But remember, this should never take the place of the advice of your doctor.

Always look for trusted forums that have a dedicated community moderator, helping to make sure that conversations are safe. Your nurse should be able to recommend trusted websites.

Seek out support groups

You may seek out local support groups, where you can meet other individuals with chronic conditions and share your experiences and coping mechanisms for managing the symptoms of your disease. Together you can learn more about living with a chronic condition and its effects.

Naturally, you may feel nervous before joining a support group. To find out if it is an appropriate fit for you, speak to the organizer in advance.

Questions that may be of interest include:

- *What is a typical meeting like?*
- *Who will run the meeting, and have they had any training?*
- *When and where does the group meet—and is it free?*

Make new friends

Your support network is not limited to others with chronic conditions. You can also find support by putting your time toward exploring your interests, such as joining a choir, signing up for an art class or participating in a local walking group. Engaging in creative activities can boost your mood and help you feel more connected to other people.



Discussing severe eosinophilic asthma with different audiences

Your approach to conversations may differ with specific people in your life. Every relationship is unique, and we all respond differently to challenging or changing situations. But there are some general approaches to keep in mind, depending on who you are talking to. While you may feel like you are alone in your condition, there are many different groups of people that can provide you with support. It then becomes about the language you use to ask for that support.

A long-term partner

Your long-term partner has likely embarked on some, if not all, of your journey with severe eosinophilic asthma. They have witnessed your symptoms and have stood by your side through the best and worst of times.

Even so, you may feel that they do not have a full understanding of your severe eosinophilic asthma and the effect it has on you. They too may have never had a chance to share with you how past experiences felt for them. Effective communication may help you and your partner stay on the same page.

• Be honest

Asthma can feel like a difficult topic to discuss, particularly if you feel like you've had the same conversation lots of times before. Don't be tempted to hide your feelings to protect your partner, or make light of the situation, as this may not be helpful in the long run.

• Look forward

While it can be tempting to mention past misunderstandings or conflicts to demonstrate your point, this will make your partner feel under attack. The result? Your positive conversation could easily turn into an argument. Instead, simply share how you feel now and what you would like to happen in future.

Suggested opening line:

“Could we have a quick chat about my asthma this evening? I'd really like us to come up with a plan together in case things get tough again...”



Discussing severe eosinophilic asthma with different audiences

A new partner

Sharing information with a new partner can be exciting. However, you may have concerns about disclosing your health status to a new partner. It is important to remember that if they understand your condition, they will be better equipped to offer you support.

Keep things simple

Remember, your aim is to describe your asthma and make sure your partner understands what severe eosinophilic asthma is, and what help and support you may want or need from them.

Gather helpful resources

Keep your asthma action plan and any useful resources, such as a website or leaflet, on hand. You can refer to them during the conversation if you need to and suggest that your partner look at them afterward. There may be a lot of information to absorb at first, so having resources they can return to later may help.

Suggested opening line:

"I'm really enjoying the time we're spending together, and I hope we can do more. So I would like to let you know I have eosinophilic asthma, a type of severe asthma, and it may be helpful for us both if I explain what that means..."



Discussing severe eosinophilic asthma with different audiences

Young children

Talking to your child about your asthma, even if they are young, will help them understand the condition.

Keep things positive

While it is important to be honest, the words you use, and the order of your sentences can have an influence on the outcome of the conversation.

Example: Telling your five-year-old that you “have a health condition that affects your breathing,” for instance, could sound terrifying. Take care to reassure them that there’s a plan in place and that everyone knows what to do when you feel unwell. An example? “I take medicines every day to help me with my breathing.”

Encourage your child to ask questions

Tell your child that they can ask you anything about your asthma, at any time. Allow them to take their time and reassure them that if you’re not able to answer immediately, you’ll help them find out the answer.

Suggested opening line:

“Remember when I had to see the doctor last week? Let’s have a little chat about why I wasn’t feeling well and what the doctor suggested...”



Discussing severe eosinophilic asthma with different audiences

Older children

Older children and teenagers may have a deeper level of understanding about your severe eosinophilic asthma than younger members of the family. But it can still be bewildering, upsetting and frightening for them, although they may not want to admit this.

Ask them how they feel

If an older child is slow to engage in the conversation, try asking them how they feel about your asthma, what worries them and what more they would like to know. Listen carefully to what they have to say and make it clear that you are available to talk whenever they need to, whether in person or even by text message, whatever works for them.

Keep it simple

Since severe eosinophilic asthma is complicated, try to keep explanations as simple as you can. Your child may pretend to understand when they are really lost. Listen to their concerns, give them time to process what you have said and ask them if they need you to explain anything again.

Suggested opening line:

“Let’s have a quick chat about my asthma and the ways in which we can help each other...”

Extended family

Even if a relative has been with you on your asthma journey since day one, you may still feel that they do not understand how valuable they could be in your support network.

Be open and honest

As well as explaining what severe eosinophilic asthma is like in simple terms, you could also use an example of how it affects you—for example, feeling breathless—to help illustrate a challenge you face.

Be clear about what you need

It’s worth remembering that people often want to help, but just don’t know how. An honest conversation about your asthma can improve their understanding and help them ensure they know what support to give you.

Suggested opening line:

“Have you got time for a chat about my asthma? I would really appreciate your help with something...”



Discussing severe eosinophilic asthma with different audiences

Close friends

Close friends can be a valuable source of support. After all, they know you well and care about you. They may have seen for themselves how severe eosinophilic asthma has affected you over time, as well.

Be as open as you can

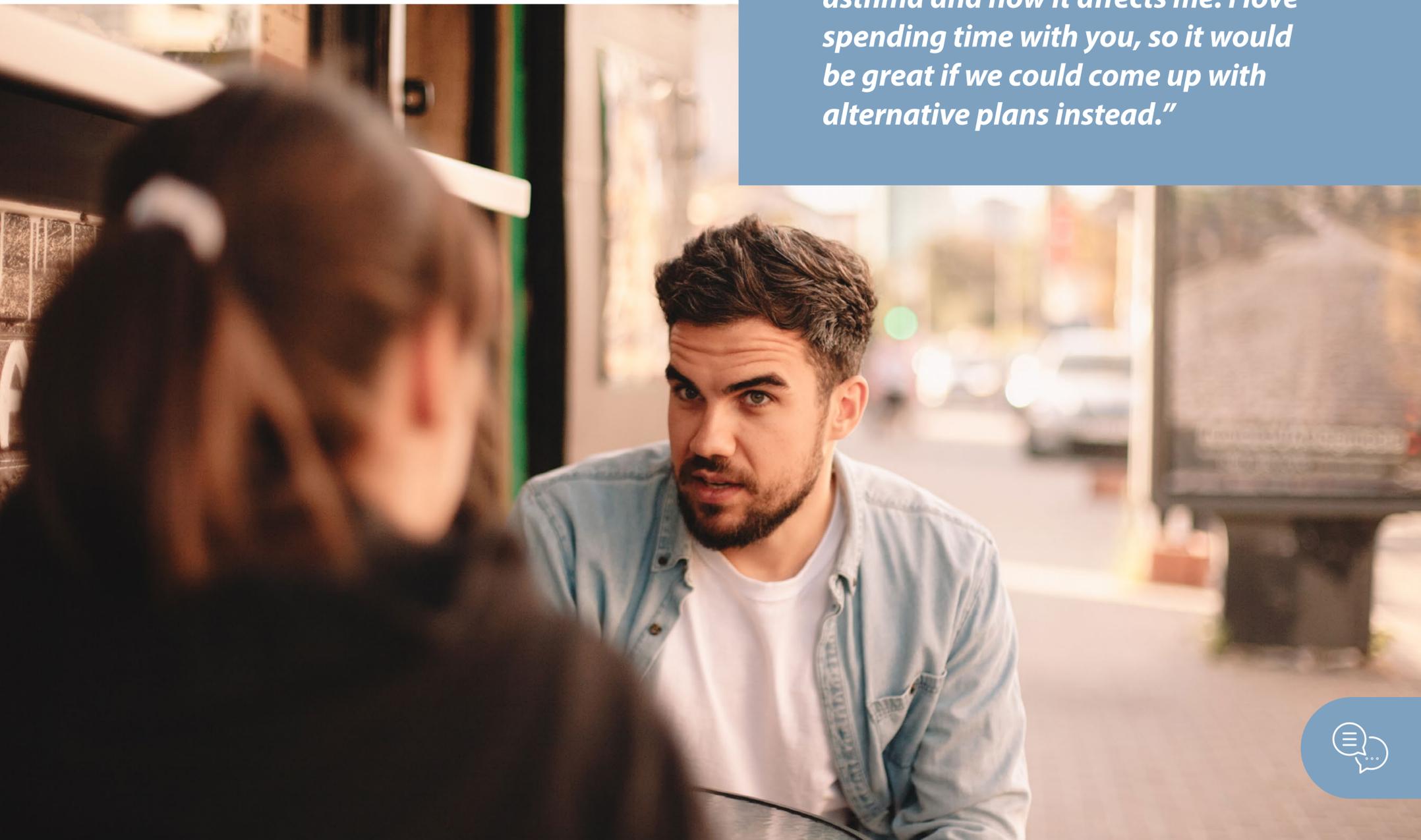
You should never feel obliged or pressured to share personal information with your friends. But you may find that sharing the truth about how your severe eosinophilic asthma affects you makes it easier for friends to help. If you fear you may be sharing too much, you can always ask your friends if they are still comfortable with the conversation.

Suggest ways they can help

As well as emotional support, friends can provide practical help too. Perhaps you'd like a friend to go with you to appointments, or even be an exercise partner.

Suggested opening line:

"I just want to explain about my asthma and how it affects me. I love spending time with you, so it would be great if we could come up with alternative plans instead."



Discussing your severe eosinophilic asthma and symptoms with others

Severe eosinophilic asthma presents many challenges, and it can often feel as though you are facing these alone. However, the truth is that your family and close friends are on the journey with you and will very likely want to help, especially if they know what you may need.

Honest and open conversations may help others understand your asthma and offer the support that you need. In this part of your guide, we take you step by step through a helpful conversation, from what to prepare in advance to checking that each person feels understood.

Brainstorm the talk in advance

Before you speak to a relative or friend about your severe eosinophilic asthma, it may be helpful to envision the conversation. It can be useful to ask yourself a few simple questions and write a few notes.

What is the goal of this conversation?

Think about what you hope to gain from your conversation. For example, you want to explain your symptoms and how they affect you. So, the goal of the talk is to help the other person understand your health condition and how they can support you in social settings.

Where and when will you have the conversation?

Ideally, you need to find somewhere comfortable and quiet, away from distractions. Choose a time that works for you both. For example, engaging your partner in a potentially lengthy conversation the minute they step through the door after a long day at work is not a recipe for success.



Discussing your severe eosinophilic asthma and symptoms with others

What can you do to encourage a good conversation outcome?

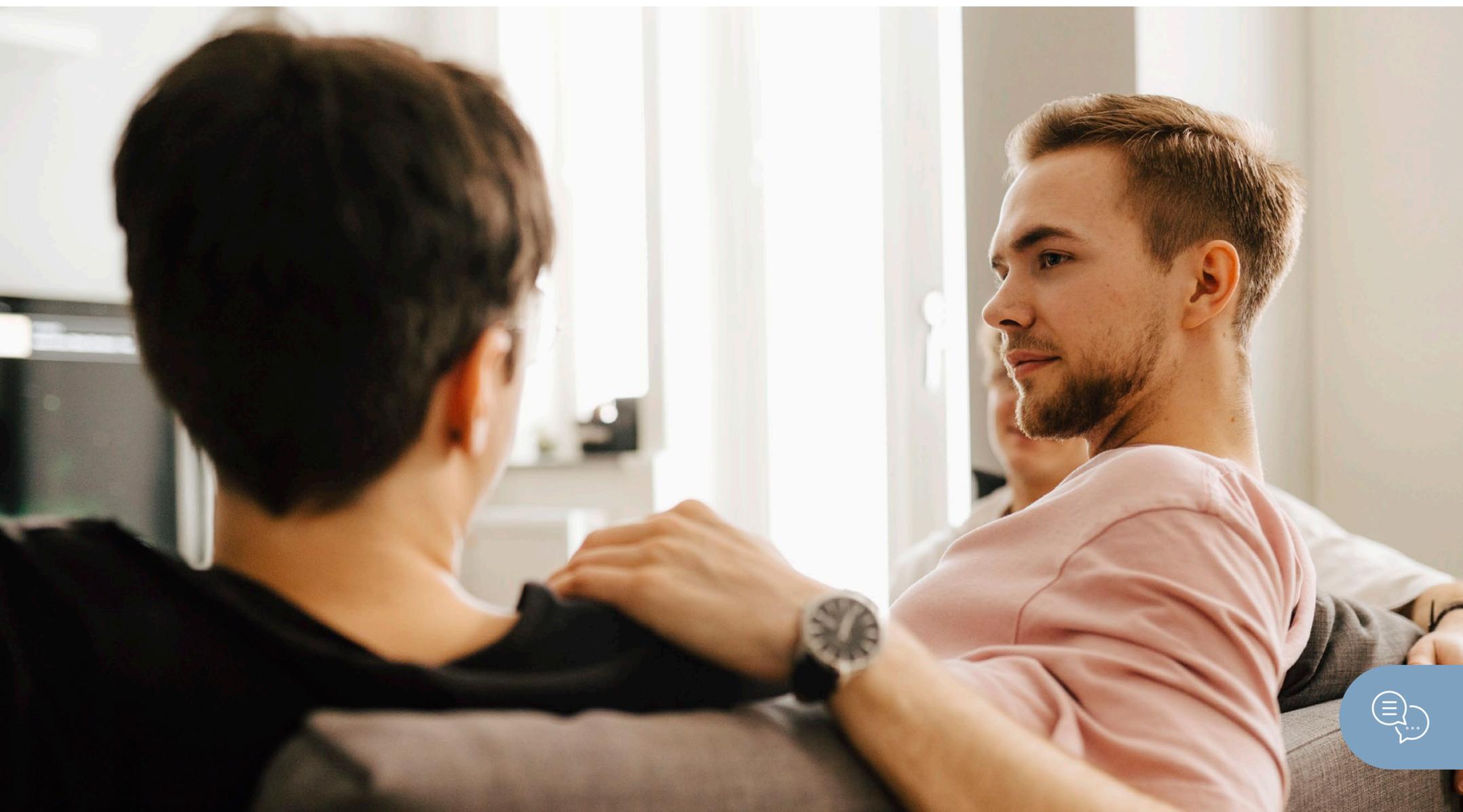
In addition to planning what you will say in advance to ensure you are as clear as possible, it may also be a good idea to gather any information that may explain or support what you are saying. For instance, you could find a useful website or YouTube video that describes what severe eosinophilic asthma is like.

Example notes:

My goal is... To explain about my condition

Where and when... In the living room when the kids have gone to bed

Must bring... My asthma action plan, the weekend itinerary



Discussing your severe eosinophilic asthma and symptoms with others

Create a positive opening line

Beginning a conversation about your severe eosinophilic asthma can feel nerve-wracking. That's why it may help to plan your opening line beforehand. It may be a good idea to start in a gentle, positive way, even if you feel emotional, upset or even angry about what you have to say. Opening with a positive tone is more likely to lead to a good outcome. It is much more challenging to talk if your friend or relative feels anxious or defensive from the outset. Additionally, giving the other person advance notice of the conversation, rather than launching straight in will give them time to think about their own questions and solutions.

Examples of positive opening lines:

"Can we have a quick chat about my asthma? I just wanted to share with you how I've been feeling lately..."

"Can we talk about my asthma action plan? I'd really like your help with a few things..."

"I'd like us to come up with a plan to manage my asthma in a social setting..."

Helpful tip:

Be an active listener. Give the other person time to speak—and show them you're listening to what they have to say. You can do this by maintaining eye contact or nodding in agreement, for instance. These nonverbal signals will help them feel more at ease and able to speak openly and honestly.



Discussing your severe eosinophilic asthma and symptoms with others

Explain *your* condition

Many people feel misunderstood or alone in their experience of severe eosinophilic asthma. Explaining more about your condition may help others understand what you are going through. The words you use will be dependent on your audience, but the summaries below can be a useful starting point. You can adapt them as needed.

Explaining asthma

“Asthma is a chronic lung condition that causes breathing problems. These can happen randomly or in response to triggers. They might not happen all the time, but when they do, it’s like trying to get air in and out of the tiniest straw. Asthma affects people of all ages.”

Explaining eosinophilic asthma

“I have eosinophilic asthma, which is a type of severe asthma. This means my asthma symptoms are caused by unusually high numbers of a type of white blood cell called eosinophils, which cause inflammation.”

Helpful tip:

Your friend or relative may have questions about your severe eosinophilic asthma. Be prepared to repeat yourself and aim to be as clear as possible to ensure they understand. Asthma is complicated and some people may need to hear the same information a few times before it makes sense.

Maintain a composed demeanour

Understandably, talking about your condition can be emotional. Just because one or both of you gets upset during the conversation does **NOT** mean that the conversation has failed. If you do become upset or even tearful, it certainly does **NOT** mean the conversation cannot still have a productive outcome. Honesty is key here—never pretend that everything is alright if it is not.

If you have been bottling up your emotions about your asthma, showing a loved one how you truly feel may clear the air and help build understanding. The trick is to carry on with the conversation and move together toward an outcome that suits you both—whether that is putting a new plan in place or simply having a hug.

Finally, hearing yourself say something out loud for the first time may be difficult. Try rehearsing the more emotional things you want to say beforehand. Take a deep breath before you begin and do not rush, so you both remain as calm as possible.



Discussing your severe eosinophilic asthma and symptoms with others

Check in with the other person

Before you draw the conversation to a close, it is a good idea to ask each other a few questions to make sure you both understand what has been said and feel happy about the conversation outcome. It may help to write a checklist of the next steps you have agreed upon and arrange another chat in a few days' time to discuss how things are going. This was just one conversation, but hopefully it has paved the way for more positive communication in future.

Suggested questions:

How do you feel now?

How does your friend or relative feel now?

Do you both understand what's been said?

Do you agree on what needs to happen next?

Helpful tip:

Even though you know the person you are talking to very well, do not assume you know exactly how they feel or what they will say or do. This is their chance to be honest, too. It is important to acknowledge what they are saying, so that they also feel listened to and understood.



Navigating social interactions abroad

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Ask for help at the airport

Arrange for any help you may need at the airport, port or station in advance. This may include transport to the boarding area or help with carrying heavy luggage. Request help even if you are not certain you will need it—it is better to use the available services, and pace yourself, so that you are more rested when you arrive at your destination.

Prepare for the trip back

Officials controlling your passage through security and customs on the way back may not speak your language, or the transport hub may be much smaller. So, what seemed simple on the way out could be more challenging on the way back. Check in advance what the local security and customs checks will be and keep that list of useful translated phrases close.



Pacing your social calendar

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Stop before you feel tired

Stopping before you feel tired will save you from over-exerting yourself. For example, if you go out with friends, it is a good idea to set yourself a time to leave even if you feel you could carry on. Tell your friends in advance so they can support you and help you stick to your plan. Do not think of it as missing out—instead, think of it as taking good care of yourself.

Plan rest around busy days

If you have a busy day coming up, such as an event you'd like to go to, make sure you plan for rest time the day before and the day after.

