

Asthma Disease Management Newsletter

winter 2009

Can You Really Outgrow Asthma?



substances, foods, medications, and environmental factors. If allergies are a trigger, once the allergies are under control, your asthma symptoms decline but don't stop carrying your rescue inhaler. You may come in contact with a trigger that you did not realize activates asthma symptoms.

Asthma is a disease just as diabetes is a disease. You can maintain control over your asthma symptoms by following up with your physician, taking medications as prescribed, and using your peak flow meter. You should have a written asthma action plan developed in partnership with your health care team. All of these tools will help you manage this disease and keep asthma symptoms at a minimum. Once you understand your triggers, you can take actions to prevent asthma attacks. Find ways to avoid triggers by talking with your doctor.

Studies indicate children with significant levels of asthma symptoms grow into adults with extremely minimal symptoms. Those adult patients tend to think their asthma is cured and they no longer have asthma – they outgrew it. According to the American Lung Association, airway inflammation is always there even when there are not a lot of symptoms.

Asthma never truly goes away. Symptom recognition presents different challenges at every developmental stage from infants to adults. Asthma is a chronic lung condition. Symptoms can return at any time and unexpectedly. Asthma can be a life-threatening disease if not properly managed. How you manage it is up to you.

Reference: *American Lung Association (lungusa.org,2008)*

There is a persistent myth about children and young adults outgrowing asthma. Unfortunately, you never outgrow asthma. Once you are diagnosed you have it forever. It's how well you control it that determines whether or not you have symptoms.

There might be a time when a patient diagnosed with asthma thinks they do not have it anymore because they have not had to use their rescue inhaler in a long time. But - always carry your rescue inhaler for asthma symptoms. It could be years since you last used it but in an emergency it can help save your life. It can take time for the ambulance to arrive and the rescue inhaler is what opens your airway immediately in an emergency.

Several triggers can cause asthma symptoms. These include seasonal allergies, weather changes, stress, illness, taking medications incorrectly, and allergies to

Center for Disease Control (CDC) Flu Vaccine

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Yearly flu vaccinations should begin in September or as soon as the vaccine is available and continue throughout the influenza season, into December, January, and even beyond. This is because the timing and duration of flu seasons vary widely. While flu outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time influenza activity peaks in January or even later. It is especially important for the following groups to be immunized: children from age six months to their fifth birthday, adults over 50 years of age and all persons with underlying medical conditions that make them more susceptible to the flu.

* "Healthy" indicates persons who do not have an underlying medical condition that makes them more susceptible to influenza complications.

Sources:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines>

TRICARE Manuals

Benefit Information

TRICARE covers both the flu shot and the nasal spray vaccine for qualifying beneficiaries when administered in a doctor's office or a network Minute Clinic. No referral is needed for vaccinations or other clinical preventive services.

Health Information Audio Library

Available 24 hours a day,

7 days a week at: 877-217-7946

Health and Wellness web site:

www.humana-military.com



Protect Yourself From Air Pollution



Asthma symptoms can increase when you are exposed to air pollution. However, you can take some basic steps to reduce your risk and your exposure – thereby avoiding an asthma attack. Ozone and particle pollution found in outside air can cause an asthma attack in adults and children or worsen symptoms. You may notice your symptoms worsening when you are outside or active. If they worsen a day or so after you have been active outside, you may be sensitive to air pollution. Discuss an action plan with your doctor. Follow the easy steps below and you can decrease your risk of an asthma attack.

- Listen to TV or radio reports on local air quality and become familiar with your area's patterns
- Learn how sensitive you are
- Plan exercise when levels are lower
- Reduce your outdoor activities when pollution is high
- If you have asthma symptoms, stop your activity
- Keep rescue medicines nearby
- Ask your doctor what symptoms to look for and how to treat them
- Don't exercise near busy roads or factories

Reference:
"Asthma and Outdoor Air Pollution"
United States Environmental Protection Agency EPA-452-F-04-002

Important Web Sites to Remember

There are many sites on the Internet that give us lots of information about various diseases and illnesses; but did you know many of these sites are approved and recommended by the Department of Defense-Veteran Affairs (DOD-VA)? Sites such as the American Diabetes Association (ADA), American Lung Association (ALA), American Heart Association (AHA), and the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) are all great sites to learn more about your health. All of these organizations have written guidelines based on research such as clinical trials and studies. These guidelines are written for the diagnosis and management of disease - assisting the physician in his plan of care and educating the patient about disease processes and making informed decisions about health care. Listed below are links to each of the web sites that are approved and recommended by the DOD-VA

and Humana Military Healthcare Services Disease Management.

- American Heart Association www.americanheart.org
- American Lung Association www.lungusa.org
- National Heart Lung and Blood Institute www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Asthma.html
- Humana Military Healthcare Services www.humana-military.com/south/bene/health-wellness/Healthandwellnesstest.asp
- American Diabetes Association www.diabetes.org

References:

AHA, *Statement of Guide Line Development, 2008*

NHLBI, *Guidelines for Diagnosis and Management of Asthma 2007*

ADA, *Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes, 2008*

ALA, *Asthma in Adults Fact Sheet, 2008*

Tips to Avoid Exercise Induced Asthma

- Check the air quality index in your area. Avoid exercising when pollution, mold and/or pollen levels are high.
- Use your inhaler before you exercise. Always keep your rescue inhaler with you.
- If you are having trouble breathing avoid exercising.
- Warm up slowly by walking, stretching or running in place for a short period of time prior to exercising.
- Dust, pollen, animal dander and/or air pollutants can trigger an attack. Avoid areas where levels of these irritants are likely to be high.
- Limit your exposure to cold air and wear a mask to warm and moisten the air.
- Always cool your body down slowly after exercising to avoid an attack.
- Consult your physician for the best location and method of exercise for you.

Resources:

Sources American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology www.aaaai.org

American Lung Association www.lungusa.org

Importance of Handwashing



Handwashing, when done correctly, is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Good handwashing technique is easy to learn and can significantly reduce the spread of infectious diseases. This applies not just in healthcare settings, but for public health in general. Today the value of handwashing in preventing disease is recognized in the community, in schools, in child care settings, and in eating establishments. The basic rule is wash your hands before preparing food, after changing diapers, and after using the bathroom.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) cites five common household scenarios in which disease-causing germs can be transmitted by contaminated hands.

Hands to food: Germs are transmitted from unclean hands to food, usually by an infected food preparer who didn't handwash after using the toilet. The germs are then passed to those who eat the food.

Infected infant to hands to other children: During diaper changing, germs are passed from an infant with diarrhea to the hands of a parent; if the parent doesn't immediately wash his or her hands before handling another child, the germs causing diarrhea are passed to the second child.

Food to hands to food: Germs are transmitted from raw, uncooked foods, such as chicken, to hands; the germs are then transferred to other foods, such as salad. Cooking the raw food kills the initial germs, but the salad remains contaminated.

Nose, mouth, or eyes to hands to others: Germs that cause colds, eye infections, and other illnesses can spread to the hands by sneezing, coughing, or rubbing the eyes and then can be transferred to other family members or friends.

Food to hands to infants: Germs from uncooked foods are transferred to hands and then to infants. If a parent handling raw chicken, for example, doesn't wash his or her hands before tending to an infant, they could transfer germs such as salmonella from the food to the infant.

Handwashing can prevent the transfer of germs in all five of these scenarios.

Follow these instructions for washing with soap and water:

- Wet your hands with warm, running water and apply liquid soap or use clean bar soap. Lather well.
- Rub your hands vigorously together for at least 15 to 20 seconds.
- Scrub all surfaces, including the backs of your hands, wrists, between your fingers and under your fingernails.
- Rinse well.
- Dry your hands with a clean or disposable towel.
- Use a towel to turn off the faucet.

Resource:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/vsp/pub/Handwashing/HandwashingTips.htm>

Center for Disease Control (CDC) Flu Vaccine Recommendations

The flu season is rapidly approaching. The single best way to protect yourself and others against influenza is to get a flu vaccination each year. Two kinds of flu vaccines are available in the United States:

- The "flu shot" – an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) given with a needle, usually in the arm. The flu shot is approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people

with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease.

- The nasal-spray flu vaccine – a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for 'live attenuated influenza vaccine' or FluMist®.) LAIV is approved for use in healthy* people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

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