



Children's Health Update

Back To School With Asthma

(NAPSA)—Asthma is the most common chronic condition among children, currently affecting over 7 million children in the U.S. Additionally, asthma is the cause of 36,000 absences from school every day. The changes in temperature and pollen that occur when summer ends and fall begins can be a serious problem for children with asthma, making back-to-school time an especially stressful time of year for parents and caregivers.

Asthma is a condition that occurs because of inflammation in both the large and small airways of the lungs, mucus buildup and tightening of the muscles in the airways. Asthma patients experience symptoms such as coughing, wheezing and chest tightness. Fortunately, asthma can be a manageable condition and there are several precautions that caregivers can take to help their child transition smoothly from summer fun to back-to-school time.

One of the most important things caregivers of a child with asthma should do is complete an Asthma Action Plan with their child's physician. Asthma Action Plans are available on a variety of asthma education sites, including www.GetSmartAboutAsthma.com. Asthma Action Plans include important information such as emergency contact numbers, how to spot danger signs, and lists of medications and when they should be taken.

"I tell all of my patients and their caregivers to complete an Asthma Action Plan, especially as children are heading back to school, to ensure medications are being taken properly and track



Proactive parents can protect their children from an asthma attack at school.

how often medications are used," said Dr. Gary Rachelefsky, associate director of the Allergy-Immunology Training Program at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. "It is helpful to track when patients are using quick-relief inhalers, because if they are using it more than twice a week, they may need to be on a daily controller medication to manage their persistent asthma."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2010, 58.3 percent of children with current asthma had at least one asthma attack in the previous 12 months, showing that the condition is not as well managed as it could be. If a child is having asthma attacks or is showing symptoms on a regular basis, it is important to talk to a doctor about a treatment plan that may include a controller medication. When asthma medicines are taken as the doctor directs, children should

be able to take part in any physical activity or sport they choose.

After caregivers have completed an Asthma Action Plan with a healthcare practitioner (HCP) and the HCP has determined an appropriate treatment plan, they should schedule a meeting with their child's teachers, school nurse and coaches to review the Asthma Action Plan. By being proactive and reviewing the plan with school personnel, caregivers can be sure that the adults caring for their children during school hours are familiar with asthma treatments and management.

When children head back to school in the fall, they are often exposed to germs they were not exposed to in the summer. With back to school comes an increase in sickness, such as the flu. Children with asthma and their caregivers should get a flu shot to minimize the risk of getting the flu, which can be a major asthma trigger.

Prior to sending a child with asthma to school, caregivers should be sure they are aware of the school's policy on carrying asthma medications. If a child is allowed to carry his or her quick relief inhaler, also called a rescue inhaler, be sure to clearly label the inhaler and note how many puffs should be taken. If the child is also on a controller medication, take the controller medication to the nurse's office and note the times that the inhaler should be used. Caregivers need to take special effort to ensure all medications are labeled properly.

For additional information and tips on asthma management, visit www.GetSmartAboutAsthma.com.