

Children's HEALTH

Foundation Helps Parents Manage Children's Asthma

(NAPSA)—Parents strive to protect their children from harmful elements in their surroundings. But there are certain things that parents simply cannot control; children are susceptible to illnesses and diseases that are not preventable or curable. As reported by the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP) in 2006, no one knows this better than the parents of the 5 million school-aged children with asthma.

As defined by the National Center for Health Statistics, asthma—a chronic respiratory disease—is characterized by onsets of inflammation and narrowing of small airways. Each child is affected to a varying degree, with attacks ranging from mild to severe.

Not only are asthma attacks dangerous (according to the National Hospital Discharge Survey, asthma is the third-ranking cause of hospitalization among children under 15 years of age), but they are also inhibitors of education. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that students miss almost 13 million days of school every year due to asthma.

The shortness of breath, wheezing, tightness in the chest and coughing experienced by children with asthma make it difficult to attend class and engage in daily activities. Asthma attacks, according to the CDC, are triggered by various allergens including mold, pet hair, cockroaches, pollen, dust mites, tobacco smoke and other environmental variants.

School officials and parents should be aware of the resources available to them. The NAEPP



Personalized jewelry items help teachers identify children with health issues such as asthma.

has recommended plans available for schools to ensure that they are asthma friendly. Some of the program recommendations include:

- Having an emergency plan for students with asthma;
- Having individual written action plans;
- Hiring a full-time nurse;
- Educating staff and students about asthma; and
- Maintaining good levels of indoor air quality to reduce the onset of asthma symptoms.

“It is important for school administrators to work with parents to ensure that students are in a safe, healthy environment that is able to respond to their individual medical needs,” says Martin Kabat, Ph.D., president and CEO of MedicAlert Foundation. “This will give parents comfort and peace of mind knowing that their child’s health will not be endangered while they are in school.”

Another tool available to parents that can help protect children with asthma in an emergency is the MedicAlert Kid Smart program.

MedicAlert, a nonprofit foundation, has been managing and communicating critical medical information on behalf of its 4 million members since 1956. The MedicAlert Kid Smart program ensures that children’s medical records are immediately available through trained operators to emergency responders to help with their treatment decisions.

MedicAlert’s 24-hour emergency response personnel also help identify children who are involved in emergencies or lost and notify designated family members and caregivers of the situation.

Children enrolled in the program can choose one of MedicAlert’s personalized identification jewelry items designed just for children and engraved with a membership number, medical condition(s) and the foundation’s 24-hour emergency hotline number.

“MedicAlert gives me added security and eases my fears in case of a medical emergency,” says Maha Brady, mother of a 5-year-old with asthma. “I included them as part of [my daughter] Catherine’s emergency action plan at school. You never know when an emergency will take place, and if I’m not around, I hope people would see Catherine’s bracelet and see her condition on the emblem.”

The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has joined with MedicAlert to bring about awareness of the Kid Smart program that underscores the importance of safety and wellness for all children across the country. For more information about asthma and other children’s conditions, visit www.medicalert.org/pta, or call (800) 754-5416.