

Children and Asthma in America

New National Survey Shows Asthma in Children Not Well Controlled "America's Pediatrician," Dr. William Sears, Offers Tips For Parents To Better Manage Their Child's Asthma

(NAPSA)—Asthma is one of the most common chronic conditions in children today. An estimated 5.8 million American children four to 18 years of age currently have asthma, and according to a recent landmark survey released on behalf of Asthma Action America®, the majority of children with asthma do not have it under control. Uncontrolled asthma places children at risk for a range of consequences from increased symptoms, missed school and activities to hospitalizations and even potentially fatal asthma attacks. If your child is one of the more than five million with asthma, you may want to reassess how well controlled his or her asthma is.

Disturbingly, the majority of parents of children with asthma surveyed inaccurately believed their child's asthma was well controlled, despite many signs pointing to the contrary. Nearly 80% of survey respondents said their child's asthma was well or completely controlled, yet:

- More than half of the children (54%) experienced sudden and severe episodes or "attacks" of asthma symptoms (coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, shortness of breath or trouble breathing) in the past 12 months

- More than one-quarter (27%) have thought their life was in danger during an asthma attack

- More than one-quarter of children (27%) have ever been hospitalized because of asthma

- One in five children (19%) experienced daytime symptoms three times a week to daily and almost a quarter (22%) experienced symptoms at night once a week to daily

These are all potential signs of uncontrolled asthma according to national treatment guidelines established by the National Institutes of Health.

"As a pediatrician, it is alarming to see so many parents thinking that their child's asthma is

Dr. Sears offers the following tips to help your child's asthma get and stay under control:

- Instead of asking your child "how is your asthma?" ask specific questions about his or her symptoms
- Periodically take the Asthma Control Test™ with your child and discuss the results with his/her health care professional
- Help ensure your child takes his or her preventative medications as prescribed by a health care professional
- Keep a daily journal to help keep track of symptoms, triggers, medications taken and other important information



under control when many children are experiencing symptoms almost on a daily basis. It's important that parents ask their children very specific questions about their asthma symptoms so that they get a clear picture of their child's level of asthma control," said William Sears, M.D., nationally acclaimed pediatrician and associate clinical professor of pediatrics at the University of California Irvine School of Medicine.

Asthma Can Have a Serious Impact on Daily Life

Asthma can also have a serious impact on school and daily activities. It is the leading cause of missed school due to chronic illness among children, and missed school days can often mean missed work days for parents. The survey showed that children with asthma missed an average of nearly four school days in the past 12 months.

Uncontrolled asthma can also mean missing out on activities, such as after-school or recreational sports. In fact, children interviewed for the survey rated "restrictions on activities" as the worst part of having asthma.

Treating the Two Main Causes of the Condition

Many parents may not realize that asthma attacks and symptoms can be prevented by long-term treatment of the two main

causes of asthma symptoms: bronchoconstriction (tightening of the muscles surrounding the airways) and inflammation (airway-swelling and irritation). Relying on fast-acting rescue medications (i.e., inhalers used during an attack) to relieve symptoms does not provide long-term asthma control. Parents should talk with their child's health care professional about effective medicines that can be taken daily to treat the two causes of asthma symptoms.

Parent and Child Communication Gap May Be Contributing Factor to Uncontrolled Asthma

The survey also showed parents and their children with asthma do not always communicate well with each other about asthma symptoms. Almost half (45%) of parents and their children disagreed that the child experienced any daytime symptoms and more than one-third of parents and their children disagreed on the specific symptoms the child experienced. According to Dr. Sears, becoming symptom-free starts with understanding when and what symptoms are occurring. Parents and their children should talk very specifically about symptoms. Taking the Asthma Control Test™ together—a simple five-question test—may help start a dialogue between parents and their child and help determine the child's level of asthma control. The results should be talked about with the child's health care professional to determine the best long-term management plan. A free brochure featuring the Asthma Control Test™ and other valuable tips on asthma control from Dr. Sears is available at www.AsthmaActionAmerica.org or by calling 1-800-377-9575.

The survey was funded by GlaxoSmithKline. GlaxoSmithKline is a research-based pharmaceutical company and a world leader in respiratory care.