



HEALTH AWARENESS

Spring Can Be Especially Challenging For Asthma Patients

Spring Allergies May Trigger Increased Inflammation in the Airways

(NAPSA)—While many people are excited about the warmer weather and blooming flowers that springtime brings, nearly 40 million Americans are also preparing for the onslaught of seasonal allergy symptoms. For some, springtime allergies can feel like a cold that just won't go away, but for others, spring allergies can be a trigger for more serious respiratory conditions like asthma.

People with asthma can experience chronic inflammation in both their large and small airways, which in turn can make the airways of the lungs very sensitive. Similar to tree limbs, the airways of the lungs are divided into “branches,” or bronchial tubes that begin with the large, main bronchi and then break off into many small airways in the lungs. Increasing evidence suggests that these small airways, when inflamed, may play a significant role in contributing to asthma symptoms and attacks. If inflammation is not treated properly, each time the airways are exposed to triggers, like pollen or other spring allergens, the inflammation increases and asthma symptoms are more likely to occur. There have been many advances in drug delivery over the past several years, which have led to the availability of treatments that target the small airways in particular—and when used daily, as prescribed, have the ability to improve asthma control.

“About half of all asthmatics also have allergies,” said Dr. LeRoy Graham, pediatric pulmonologist at Georgia Pediatric Pulmonology Associates. “Spring allergies may seem like a small inconvenience to some people, but for a person with persistent asthma, allergy season can be very problematic, particularly among people who may not have been keeping up with daily asthma treatments before spring allergies hit. During spring allergies, daily asthma management is critical to help reduce inflammation in the large and small air-



For tips about dealing with asthma, you can go to www.GetSmartAboutAsthma.com.

ways of the lungs and control asthma.”

While inflammation can be a defense mechanism for the body, it can also be harmful if it occurs at the wrong time or lingers when it is no longer needed. When allergens, like pollen, are inhaled, the body can mistake them for an invader and attack them. When this occurs, the body produces chemicals that cause inflammation around the allergen to isolate and destroy it. The airways of people with asthma are even more sensitive to allergens, which can cause the inner linings of the airways to become inflamed, leaving less room for air to move through. Additionally, the muscles surrounding the airways tighten up and the mucus glands in the airways may produce thick mucus, which can further block the large and small airways.

While asthma is a chronic condition and has many triggers beyond just spring allergens, it can be successfully managed and may not hinder people from doing the things they enjoy. A new website, www.GetSmartAboutAsthma.com, offers tips about managing asthma and inflammation in the large and small airways. The website also offers downloadable materials, like a symptom tracker, doctor discussion guide and asthma diary, so that patients can track their own asthma symptoms and triggers, during spring allergy season and throughout the year.