

Preventing Asthma Emergencies

(NAPSA)—Now that the spring asthma and allergy season is in full bloom, the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) wants to help the more than 17 million Americans with asthma recognize the warning signs that can help them avoid an asthma emergency.

The often-missed warning signs of poorly controlled asthma are:

- Waking at night wheezing and/or coughing;
- Requiring a quick-relief inhaler more than twice a week;
- Missing school or work;
- Being unable to participate in everyday activities;
- Requiring emergency or urgent care; and
- Finding a decreasing number on asthmatic's Peak Flow Meter daily home test.

"Each year, nearly two million Americans end up in the emergency department because of poorly controlled asthma," says Arlen Stauffer, MD, of the ACEP. "Most people really don't understand that asthma is a chronic condition that requires management on a daily basis. Patients need to know the warning signs of poor asthma control, recognize their triggers and understand how to treat the two main causes of asthma symptoms."

Inflammation (swelling and irritation of the airways) and bronchoconstriction (tightening of the muscles surrounding the airways) are the two main causes of asthma symptoms, which include shortness of breath, wheezing, chest tightness and cough.



Being aware of the warning signs can help many people avoid an asthma emergency.

Asthma "triggers"—substances or conditions that cause airways to become inflamed and constrict—also play an important role in causing asthma symptoms. Individual patients may have more than one trigger, but common triggers include allergens (e.g., pollen, mold, dust mites), irritants in the air (e.g., tobacco smoke, perfume, scented soap), respiratory infections, exercise and extreme weather conditions.

There are effective treatments that can help patients prevent symptoms from occurring in the first place. Better asthma control may reduce the impact the disease has on people's lives and reduce the risk of attacks or symptoms that require emergency care.

"ACEP encourages people with asthma to talk with their regular provider about proper asthma management, and keep an eye out for asthma warning signs, so they can have a healthier and happier spring," adds Dr. Stauffer.