



Back to School Newsletter - Fall 2023

A collaboration between NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center and NewYork-Presbyterian Queens

Asthma Basics

Asthma is a chronic disease that causes the airways of the lungs to tighten and swell. Asthma is common among children and teens. An asthma attack happens when the lungs aren't getting enough air to breathe.

Things that cause asthma attacks are called triggers. Triggers are everywhere and your child's home and school may be full of triggers. Talk to your healthcare provider to help you figure out your child's triggers. Some examples of triggers are:

- Pets**
- Pollen**
- Cigarette Smoke**
- Mold and Dust**
- Cockroaches and Mice**
- Strong Cleaning Products**

Young children may not be able to tell to you if their asthma is getting worse - look for these warning signs:

- Cough at Night**
- Cold or Flu**
- Developing a Fever**
- Runny/Stuffy Nose**
- Sneezing**
- Restlessness**
- Not Eating or Drinking as Normal**
- Dark Circles Under the Eyes**
- Seems More Tired than Usual**

True Stories: Living with Asthma as a Teen

By Taylor P., Age 16, Asthma Patient

My life took a big turn when I was diagnosed with asthma in early September 2019. Before my diagnosis, I had spent months struggling to catch my breath and could not do many of my regular activities. When my doctors finally figured out that I had asthma, I felt an incredible sense of relief. Knowing I had asthma now allowed me to work on an asthma management plan with my healthcare team. As part of my plan, I learned I must use a spacer to ensure my medication reaches my lungs. Following my asthma plan has helped me to feel normal again.

Although my asthma has changed some of my routines, it does not define the rest of my life. At first, I had doubts about how I would be able to introduce my asthma plan into my regular day-to-day routine, but I soon realized that I could live the life I desired if I stayed on top of my asthma plan. My asthma journey has had some bumps, like being rushed to the emergency room, especially during flu season. Over time, I learned more and more about my illness, which has helped me to learn about my triggers and what I could do to manage my asthma symptoms better.

One of my biggest concerns was coping with asthma during school. I was anxious about attending science class because it was on the top floor of my school's building; I was worried that climbing the stairs would trigger an asthma attack during class or in the stairwell. Instead of complaining about shortness of breath, I decided to find a solution: I used the elevator when necessary and let the school staff know about my asthma. With my albuterol always in hand, gym class, moving around my school, and other activities became much more manageable.

By sharing my experiences with asthma, I hope to inspire fellow teens facing asthma to work with their healthcare providers, families, and teachers to build an asthma plan they can follow. Asthma was a big obstacle for me, but I faced my challenge head-on, refusing to let my asthma diagnosis interfere with my daily activities. We can turn challenges into victories, proving that life with asthma is not about limitations but about finding creative ways to embrace it.

Contact: PedsAsthma@med.cornell.edu

Asthma Tip Corner

- If you think that your child may be getting sick, they likely are - you know your child best!
- Work with your child's healthcare provider to take steps in controlling your child's asthma.
- Have the **asthma action plan** on hand and make sure that you understand and agree with the plan.
- Do not stop giving any everyday medications without first talking with your child's healthcare provider.
- If your child has a babysitter, or is often cared for by friends or other family members, make sure that they know the early warning signs and are able to give the medication correctly.
- September is high allergy season - take extra care if your child's asthma gets worse because of viruses/outdoor allergens.
- Ask for help!

MEDucation Corner

Check with your healthcare provider about the following vaccines:

Influenza (flu) vaccine
COVID-19 vaccine
Pneumococcal vaccine
RSV vaccine

Controller vs **Rescue** inhalers - using a spacer with your inhaler helps more of the medicine go to your lungs

- **Controller:** Taken regularly to control chronic symptoms and prevent asthma attacks
- **Rescue/Quick Reliever:** Taken as needed for quick, short-term relief of symptoms — *used to prevent or treat an asthma attack*



Autumn Asthma Workshop

Learn about asthma and its triggers during the fall
Tuesday, September 19th | 5:30 pm - 6:00 pm
Virtual Workshop via
Zoom link: <https://nyph.zoom.us/j/95573172447>
Meeting ID: **955-7317-2447**
This virtual workshop will be in Spanish and English.

Preparing for Back to School

Have all the needed medications and a spacer for school.

Make sure that the daycare/school has all the proper forms (**Medication Administration Form, Asthma Action Plan**) to help with your child's asthma and keep them well at school.

Have the school nurse's direct phone number and communicate with them regularly. If your child is not feeling well, they can be treated at school if needed.

If your child starts to miss school days because of their asthma, talk with their healthcare provider to help better manage their asthma.

Community Connections

The Pediatric Community Health Worker (CHW) program, through the NYP Center for Community Health Navigation, aims to help patients and their caregivers address the social needs that interfere with their health management and well-being while providing support and coordination of care during every step of the way.

Who Is Eligible for our Program

Caregivers of children with poorly managed asthma and children with special health care needs.

How Do We Help

Provide referrals/support with:
home/environmental assessment/integrated pest management, EI/CPSE/CSE/OPWDD, SNAP and other public benefits, appointment adherence, medical insurance

How To Make a Referral

Speak with your healthcare provider, an asthma educator, or directly with the community health workers during practice sessions

Questions

Contact: Henley Vargas, Program Manager, at 347-899-1624 or email hev9012@nyp.org