



May Asthma Awareness Month

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease of the air passages that strikes one in 15 Americans. It can be caused by allergens or irritants such as smoke, dust, or pollen which causes the airways to become inflamed and narrow. If one parent has asthma, chances are one in three that each child will have asthma. If both parents have asthma, it is much more likely (7 in 10) that their children will have asthma. Symptoms may include wheezing, coughing, pain or tightness in the chest and shortness of breath. Not all asthma attacks are the same. In severe attacks, the airways can close so much that not enough oxygen gets to vital organs. This condition is a medical emergency.

Asthma Facts

Every day in America:

- 40,000 people miss school or work due to asthma. It's the number one cause of school absenteeism among children
- 30,000 people have an asthma attack.
- 5,000 people visit the emergency room due to asthma
- 1,000 people are admitted to the hospital due to asthma with an average length of stay of three days.
- 11 people die from asthma
- The annual cost of asthma is estimated to be nearly \$18 billion.

Management of Asthma

There is no cure for asthma but it can be managed. Contact your physician to determine the best approach in managing your asthma.

- Quick relief- such as inhalers to relax the airway muscles
- Long-term control – medications taken on a daily basis to control airway inflammation
- Monitor lung function – Use a peak flow meter to monitor lung function. Lung function decreases sometimes two to three days before symptoms of asthma attacks occur.
- Environmental control – avoid the triggers that cause asthma attacks by encasing bedding in dust-proof covers, avoid bedding made of down, or foam rubber with synthetic materials, avoid pets with fur or feathers, consider replacing carpeting with hardwood floors, keep the humidity low and use the air conditioner.

For more information please visit:

- Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (www.aafa.org)
- National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, National Institute of Health (www.nhlbi.nih.gov)
- www.healthscout.com/ency/68/54/main.html