



# BREATHING SPACE

## Respiratory Disease Newsletter

*Health Promotion & Chronic Disease Division  
Chronic Disease & Environmental Epidemiology Section*



Volume 1, Number 4

December 2003

BREATHING SPACE, a quarterly respiratory disease newsletter, is produced by the Minnesota Department of Health Asthma Program. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide health professionals, school nurses, and community members with current research, information, and resources on respiratory disease.

This newsletter is also distributed electronically. To receive an electronic version, contact:  
[jennifer.walker@health.state.mn.us](mailto:jennifer.walker@health.state.mn.us)

For more information, go to the MDH asthma website at:  
[www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma)

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### Downloadable Asthma Action Plan

If you work with health care providers or treat patients with asthma, check out this new downloadable software for an interactive Asthma Action Plan (AAP). You can download it from the following web address: <https://www.mnasthma.org/AAP/>.

This latest AAP from the Minnesota Department of Health is similar to the online AAP that was launched in June 2003. However, with this downloadable version, providers may save individualized AAP's and patient data while maintaining confidentiality on a PC or via their own intra-net. Intra-net network installation is an option a provider may choose when traveling to multiple clinic sites or when sharing AAP and pharmaceutical prescription information with other providers in the same intra-net network.

The final AAP can be printed in both English and Spanish. The provider may choose to create and print a prescription of selected asthma medications.

The AAP is a tool to help asthma patients and medical professionals manage and prevent asthma symptoms by providing crucial information to those who come in contact with or care for people with asthma. It is based on the NIH/NHLBI asthma guidelines: ([www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/asthma/asthgdln.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/asthma/asthgdln.htm)). Examples of those who should have a copy of the AAP include: patients, parents, grandparents, school nurses, coaches, teachers, daycare providers, and all medical providers who care for a person with asthma.

If you have comments or would like to provide feedback on the AAP, please contact Susan Ross at [susan.ross@health.state.mn.us](mailto:susan.ross@health.state.mn.us) or at 612-676-5629.

## Cost of Asthma in Minnesota



According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, an estimated 247,000 Minnesotans were affected by asthma in 1998, at an estimated cost of more than \$187 million. This figure includes both the direct costs of medical care and the indirect costs of time lost from work or school. Based on data from the Minnesota Hospital Association, in 1999, asthma cost Minnesotans more than \$33 million in hospitalizations and emergency department visits.

### MDH Asthma Staff

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### New Staff

Laura Oatman recently joined the MDH Asthma Program as a research scientist. Her responsibilities include researching and implementing the environmental elements established in the state asthma plan. During her 25 years with MDH, Laura has worked on a variety of environmental health issues such as indoor air and childhood lead poisoning prevention. She has an undergraduate degree in biology and a masters degree in environmental engineering. We are glad to have her!

For more information, contact Wendy Brunner at 612-676-5541 or [wendy.brunner@health.state.mn.us](mailto:wendy.brunner@health.state.mn.us).

#### Sources:

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (<http://www.aafa.org>)  
Minnesota Hospital Association

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## School Staff Asthma Manual and Training

MDH, in collaboration with school personnel statewide, will be offering an asthma education and management program geared towards providing asthma education and process/policy/procedural recommendations for schools, school districts, and individuals providing care to students with asthma. The program includes both a manual and a training session.

Development of the manual is currently underway. We have created a statewide advisory group of school personnel, including school nurses, coaches, and administrators, to assist in the development of the manual.

The training will be offered regionally to school nurses, health aides, administrative assistants, principals, teachers, custodians, coaches, and others. There will be four trainings available to suburban metro area school staff beginning in February 2004. Starting fall 2004, the training program will be rolled out statewide. Trainings will be offered regionally throughout Minnesota with a focus on a "train the trainer" model. Optimally, we would like at least two individuals from each school district to attend the MDH training and then bring the information back to staff at their district.

MDH staff would like to begin scheduling the training for school year 2004-2005. If you are interested in assisting with a training in your region, please contact Deb Hill at [deborah.hill@health.state.mn.us](mailto:deborah.hill@health.state.mn.us) or 612-676-5213.

Look for more information about this program and for the dates of the suburban metro trainings on the MDH asthma website at: [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/Events.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/Events.html).

## Upcoming Events

### **PACE Training: SE Region**

December 3, 2003  
Cabella's, Owatonna  
Dave Towers, 507-536-9955  
[Dave.towers@alamn.org](mailto:Dave.towers@alamn.org)

### **PACE Training: Central Region**

December 12-13, 2003  
Holiday Inn, St. Cloud  
Kathy Benham, 320-255-9922  
[Kathy.benham@alamn.org](mailto:Kathy.benham@alamn.org)

### **MDH School Asthma Training**

February 24, 2004  
Mounds View Community Center  
Deb Hill, 612-676-5213  
[deborah.hill@health.state.mn.us](mailto:deborah.hill@health.state.mn.us)

### **MDH School Asthma Training**

March 9, 2004  
Minnetonka District Building  
Deb Hill, 612-676-5213  
[deborah.hill@health.state.mn.us](mailto:deborah.hill@health.state.mn.us)

### **Asthma Sharing Conference**

May 13, 2004  
Holiday Inn, St. Cloud  
1-800-LUNG-USA (586-4872)

## **Skate on the Wild Side January 4, 2004**

The American Lung Association of Minnesota and the Minnesota Wild are teaming up to BLOW THE WHISTLE ON ASTHMA! Skate on the Wild Side is a chance to skate at the Xcel and make an impact in the fight against this chronic disease. Skate on the Wild Side is taking place Sunday, January 4, 2004.

Sign-up on-line toady at [www.SkateOnTheWildSide.com](http://www.SkateOnTheWildSide.com) or call 651-268-7610. Pre-registration is required.

## **Minnesota Takes Action to Protect Students From Diesel Fumes**

In May 2002, Minnesota adopted legislation to protect the health and safety of school children from harmful diesel emissions. This law calls for schools to reduce the unnecessary idling of school buses in front of schools, and when possible relocate bus parking away from the schools' air-intake vents (or if necessary, relocate the air-intake vents). The Sierra Club and other environmental and health organizations were instrumental in ensuring the safety of students' health from unnecessary exposure to toxic diesel fumes.

Toxic chemicals in diesel fumes increase the risk of asthma, lung and heart disease, and are responsible for as many as 125,000 cancers nationwide. Children are especially vulnerable to the effects of diesel pollution. Children breathe more rapidly and inhale more pollutants per pound of body weight than adults, and their lungs are still developing. Bus idling and bus queuing (back to front line up of the buses) increases the concentrations of harmful particulate pollution inside school buses. Particulate pollution impairs development of lungs and aggravates asthma in children.

With this information and the new law, it is simple for a school to take significant steps to reduce children's exposure to harmful diesel emissions. A school can adopt a no idling policy by posting no idling signs and alerting bus drivers, parents, and administrators that engines should be turned off when a bus (or any vehicle) is waiting or parked. Only in inclement weather is it necessary for buses to idle. In addition, a school can redesign bus parking zones or air-intake vents. By moving bus parking areas away from school air-intake vents or parking buses at a diagonal to avoid front to-back passing of diesel fumes, students' exposure to the pollution is reduced.

For more information, go to the Sierra Club website at: [www.northstar.sierraclub.org/schoolbus](http://www.northstar.sierraclub.org/schoolbus). If you have questions or would like to request resources or assistance, please contact Michelle Rosier, Sierra Club Air Toxics Organizer at 612-379-3853 or [michelle.rosier@sierraclub.org](mailto:michelle.rosier@sierraclub.org).

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## **American Lung Association Minnesota Awarded \$5 Million**

The American Lung Association of Minnesota (ALAMN) has been awarded a \$5 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to implement a new five-year asthma program in the Twin Cities. The \$5 million grant will fund the Controlling Asthma in American Cities initiative, which is focused on improving asthma care for children in the urban core of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The initiative calls for the ALAMN to work closely with schools, childcare providers, health plans, clinics and other organizations to improve asthma care for children.

For more information, contact Jill Heins at 651-223-9578 or [jill.heins@alamn.org](mailto:jill.heins@alamn.org).

## Questions about lung health?

Call 1-800-548-8252  
American Lung Association  
Call Center

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For more information, or to request this material in another format contact: Deb Hill at 612-676-5213 or [deborah.hill@health.state.mn.us](mailto:deborah.hill@health.state.mn.us)  
MN Relay Service TDD: 1-800-627-3528

Breathing Space is also available on the MDH Asthma website:  
[www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma)

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## Flu Shot

It's not too late to get a flu shot. An annual flu shot is recommended for anyone who has a long-term health problem including asthma. The best time to get a flu shot is in October or November. However, because the flu season typically peaks between January and March, vaccination in December, or even later, can be beneficial. Contact your health care provider for more information.

## Air Quality Index

The Air Quality Index (AQI) reports daily air quality conditions. In Minnesota, four pollutants are used to calculate the AQI: ground-level ozone, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, and fine particles. To check the AQI, go to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency website at <http://aqi.pca.state.mn.us/hourly/>. You can also sign up for e-mail alerts at this site.

## Family Asthma Program

The Family Asthma Program is an American Lung Association of Minnesota (ALAMN) asthma education resource for children ages 5-11 and their families. Families work with an asthma counselor who provides on-going asthma education, support, and connection to community resources. Qualifications are: children age 5 to 11 who have a diagnosis of asthma; covered by MA, self-insured/low income, or uninsured; and living in the Twin Cities area. To learn more or to make a referral, contact Janelle O'Brien at 651-268-7616.



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