



BREATHING SPACE

Respiratory Disease Newsletter

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



Volume 2, Number 4

December 2004

Updated Asthma Action Plan

Health care providers who treat patients with asthma are encouraged to utilize downloadable, interactive software developed by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to assist in developing an individualized Asthma Action Plan (AAP) for each patient with asthma. This software contains updated formulary information from 7 key Minnesota health plans. If you downloaded this software when it first became available in November 2003, you should do a second download now to update your original software at <https://www.mnasthma.org/aap/>. In addition to the updated formulary information, an AAP printed with the updated software contains consent language that is Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and Minnesota consent law compliant. The updated consent box allows the health care provider to give permission for a child to carry their inhaler medication in school per the state inhaler law (**Minnesota Statutes 121A.221**).

The AAP is a tool to help patients and health care providers manage and prevent asthma symptoms, while providing information that is crucial for those who care for or have contact with patients. The AAP is based on guidelines of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)¹. The NHLBI guidelines recommend written AAPs for everyone with asthma, and Minnesota's strategic plan for addressing asthma calls for written AAPs for patients who have persistent asthma (levels 2–4). The strategic plan also calls for Minnesota providers to follow the NIH-NHLBI guidelines when treating asthma². The software for this interactive AAP considers symptom information put in by the provider and determines the patient's severity level – (1) mild intermittent, (2) mild persistent, (3) moderate persistent, or (4) severe persistent. The program then presents appropriate disease management choices for that severity level. The downloadable version allows providers to save individualized AAPs and patient data on a personal computer, and offers the user the ability to access the same AAPs via their local intranet while maintaining confidentiality. Intranet network installation of the software is useful for providers who travel to multiple clinic sites or for sharing AAPs and pharmaceutical information with other providers in the same intranet network.

The final AAP can be printed in English and/or Spanish. The provider may also create and print a prescription for the selected prescribed asthma medications. By selecting "All Medications" from the Health Plan box, the plan is usable in any state in the United States. The software also provides space for a clinic or health plan to insert its own logo or other identifying information and gives the option to enter multiple health care providers names and numbers onto the same database.

In a series of asthma trainings for school personnel throughout Minnesota this fall, the interactive AAP has been introduced to more than 400 school nurses and other school health staff. They received a comprehensive manual, "Managing Asthma in Minnesota Schools: A Comprehensive Resource and Training Manual for School Personnel,"³ that can be viewed at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/schoolmanual.html>. The "All Health Staff" section contains much of the information that is presented at the trainings.

School health personnel are being encouraged to have more contact with physicians and others treating school children with asthma. Schools are also encouraged to seek written AAPs for their students with asthma. School nurses may be sending home to parents samples of the interactive AAP form. A provider who receives an AAP from a parent or school health office can go to <https://www.mnasthma.org/AAP/>, complete an AAP for the student, and print multiple copies, including at least one for the parents and one for the school.

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Flu Vaccines and Asthma

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the limited supply of flu vaccine this year should be given to protect people who are at greatest risk for serious complications from the flu. Adults and children two years of age and older with chronic lung or heart disorders - including asthma - are considered part of this high-risk group. The nasal immunization "FluMist" is not recommended for people who have asthma or who have reactive airway disease. Contact the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Flu Hotline at 800-657-3970 or 612-676-5100 to hear a list of local flu shot providers or visit the MDH flu shot website to locate a flu shot clinic in your area. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/index.html>.

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Jessica Lundin has joined the asthma staff as a student worker. She is in the process of obtaining her Masters Degree in the Division of Epidemiology at the University of Minnesota.

Upcoming Events

PACE Training - East Central Region
January 12, 2005, 2:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Contact: Lori Swanson at
lori.swanson@co.kanabec.mn.us

Asthma Management and Guidelines -North West Region
February 23, 2005, 5:30 - 9:00 p.m.
Contact: Michelle Moncriefe Foreman
at nwrac@yahoo.com

Although a flu shot is recommended for people with asthma, there are basic steps you can follow to help protect yourself and others from illness this flu season. The MDH recommends the following:

- Stay healthy. Get plenty of rest, exercise, eat properly, and practice good nutrition.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue, whenever you cough or sneeze. And then throw the tissue away.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- Clean your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or with an alcohol-based, waterless hand sanitizer.
- If you get the flu, or other illness, avoid exposing others. Stay home from work or school.

For further information, call the MDH Flu Hotline or your health care provider.

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The desktop/downloadable interactive AAP is also available on a CD. If you would like to receive a CD with the AAP software, or to provide any feedback on the AAP, please contact Susan Ross at susan.ross@health.state.mn.us or 612-676-5629. For other information or to provide educational information to patients regarding asthma, please visit the [MDH Asthma website](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/) at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/>.

Footnotes:

¹ Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma, NIH-NHLBI, 2002, Report from National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP) Expert Panel <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/asthma/asthgdln.htm>

² "A Strategic Plan for Addressing Asthma in Minnesota," Commissioner Asthma Advisory Work Group, June 2002, <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/StatePlan.html>

³ "Managing Asthma in Minnesota School: A Comprehensive Resource & Training Manual for School Personnel", MDH, August 2004. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/schoolmanual.html>

Minnesota Receives Grant Award Toward “Steps to a Healthier U.S.”

In September 2004 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced that the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), in partnership with four communities, was awarded a \$1.5 million grant for each of the next five years to help improve the health of Minnesotans. More than 100 applicants from across the nation submitted proposals for the funds and 11 were chosen to receive grants. The grants are part of the “Steps to a Healthier US” initiative that was established in 2003 to foster healthy behaviors, prevent disease and reduce disparities in health care. The “Steps” initiative in Minnesota aims to reduce the burden of diabetes, obesity and asthma by addressing three key risk factors: physical inactivity, poor nutrition, and tobacco use. The four Minnesota communities that will participate with MDH in the “Steps” project are Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester, and Willmar. The MDH, along with the Minnesota Department of Education, will provide technical assistance to local health departments, schools, and communities and will assist in the implementation of interventions in the four cities.

Middle School Study Principals Receive Final Reports

In April 2003 the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) administered a survey to a convenience sample of all seventh and eighth graders at 15 middle schools in greater Minnesota. The goal of the survey was to characterize the range of asthma symptoms, triggers, and control measures found in this group of middle school students. In October and November 2004 the MDH mailed packets out to the principals of the middle schools that participated in the study. The packets included copies of the survey report specific to their school, a schedule of the fall “Managing Asthma in Minnesota Schools” trainings offered by the MDH available at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/schoolmanual.html, a brochure from the Minnesota Asthma Coalition (MAC), a copy of the press release with the survey results from World Asthma Day (May 4, 2004), and a copy of the Breathing Space June 2004 issue which also highlighted the survey results. Similar packets were sent to school nurses of the middle schools in the study, and to the regional MAC coordinators for each school.

The results of these surveys were featured in the June 2004 issue of Breathing Space (available at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/Newsletter.html). In summary, the survey found that 24 percent of students with asthma reported missing one or more days of school in the past year due to asthma symptoms, 36 percent reported missing recess, sports or other activities, and 66 percent of middle school students with asthma do not have individualized care plans—called Asthma Action Plans—to manage their asthma. Disturbingly, the surveys also found that 46 percent of the middle school students with asthma reported that they lived in a household where someone smokes. A complete copy of the survey results can be found at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/Research.html.

All participating schools have been offered an on-site, indoor air assessment of their school. This will include a walkthrough by the MDH to identify potential environmental triggers of asthma. A final report, including recommendations for addressing any potential environmental triggers, will be provided to the school following the assessment. A follow-up survey of seventh and eighth graders at the same middle schools will be conducted in the spring of 2005. The MDH Asthma Program greatly appreciates the cooperation of these schools and looks forward to continued partnerships between schools and public health to improve the lives of students with asthma. For more information about the Middle School Study please contact Subha Chandar at 612-676-5545 or subha.chandar@health.state.mn.us.

Regional MAC Update

The American Lung Association – Minnesota (ALAMN) hosted a retreat on October 26, 2004 for the Minnesota Asthma Coalition (MAC) Regional Coordinators. During the retreat the Coordinators began planning for World Asthma Day — May 3, 2005. Watch for more information about World Asthma Day in the next issue of “Breathing Space.”

Every regional asthma coalition in Minnesota now has a coordinator! If you haven’t joined your regional coalition, please contact one of the following:

Metro: Chris Krueger, kruegercomm@comcast.net, 651-340-6106
North West: Michelle Moncrieffe Foreman, nwrac@yahoo.com, 218-751-0755
North East: Maureen Strange, strangem@co.st-louis.mn.us, 218-725-5239
East Central: Lori Swanson, lori.swanson@co.kanabec.mn.us, 320-679-6316
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South Central: Erin Simmons, scasthma@hickorytech.net, 507-381-8257
South West: Amy Roggenbuck, aroggen@farmerstel.net, 320-598-7313

Erin Simmons has accepted the position of MAC manager with ALAMN. Erin will also continue in her role as the MAC Regional Coordinator for the South-Central Region.

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: Steve Golat at 612-676-5244 or steve.golat@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

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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: leslie.schreier@health.state.mn.us. For more information, go to the MDH asthma website at: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma.

This newsletter was supported by Grant//Cooperative Agreement #U59/CCU522470 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC.

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Printed on Recycled Paper



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