

BREATHING SPACE

Respiratory Disease Newsletter

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



Volume 3, Number 2

June 2005

Upcoming Events

Managing Asthma in Minnesota Schools training

Monday, November 28, 2005
St. Cloud, MN

For more information contact: Sally Sabathier at sally.sabathier@health.state.mn.us or 612-676-5226.

Asthma Education Certification Course

October 12-13, 2005
Grand Rios Water Park Resort & Conference Center
Brooklyn Park, Minnesota.
For more information visit: <http://www.alamn.org/prof/courses.asp>, or contact: Cheryl Sasse at 651-223-9565 or cheryl.sasse@alamn.org.

Attention Athletic Coaches! There is an asthma education program and clipboard just for you!
See page 2 for details!

Spring Signals Increased Ozone Exposure

People with asthma and other respiratory conditions should pay close attention to ozone levels starting in the spring – especially on hot sunny days. This is the time when ozone concentrations are highest in air because ozone is formed by chemicals (emitted from fuels, engines, industry and power plants) that react with sunlight during warm weather.

Even at low levels, ozone is associated with lung irritation and inflammation, asthma exacerbations, reduced lung capacity, and increased susceptibility to respiratory illnesses, such as pneumonia and bronchitis. These adverse effects result in increases in the number of emergency room visits, hospitalizations, school absences, and lost workdays in Minnesota.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) measures ozone pollution during the warmest months of the year – April through September. Levels of air pollutants are posted on the MPCA Web site (<http://aqi.pca.state.mn.us/hourly/>) using a tool called the Air Quality Index, or AQI. The AQI is updated hourly, seven days a week, 6 a.m. to 12 midnight. AQI information includes health cautions for vulnerable or “sensitive” populations. Sensitive populations include older adults, people with respiratory conditions including asthma, children, and healthy adults who exercise vigorously. Symptoms of exposure to ozone and other air pollutants, such as fine particles, include: coughing, chest tightness, shortness of breath, and worsening of asthma symptoms.

To reduce the risk of respiratory effects on days when air pollution levels are high, people can postpone vigorous exercise or otherwise modify their level of physical activity. Although regular exercise is important for staying healthy, it’s also important to pay attention to your body and notice if you are experiencing asthma or other
(continued on page 3)

Smoke-Free Ordinances Now in Effect

Secondhand smoke is strongly linked to the development of asthma in young children and is an irritant that can trigger asthma attacks in both children and adults. Exposure to secondhand smoke accounts for up to 62,000 heart disease deaths every year in the U.S. It is responsible for about 3,000 lung cancer deaths each year in nonsmoking adults. The most effective way to protect people from the dangers of secondhand smoke is to eliminate secondhand smoke from the environment.

As of March 31, 2005, smoke-free ordinances went into effect in several counties and communities including Hennepin and Ramsey Counties and the cities of Bloomington, Golden Valley, and Minneapolis. The American Lung Association of Minnesota (ALAMN) estimates that over 38 percent of Minnesotans are now protected by smoke-free ordinances. These ordinances range from restaurants only to all public places including places of work, restaurants, and bars. For information on the communities and counties with smoke-free ordinances and the types of establishments covered, visit the ALAMN website at <http://www.alamn.org/PublicPolicy/LawMap.asp>.

You can also support smoke-free restaurants in communities without ordinances. The Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota maintains a list of smoke-free restaurants by city. <http://www.ansrmn.org/Smokeless%20Restaurants.htm>.



Drawing Winners!

Since we began offering trainings on “Managing Asthma in Minnesota Schools,” we have followed the participants’ application of their new knowledge in their schools three months and one year after the training. The participants who reported on the progress of their goals at these intervals were entered in a drawing to receive a lung model, courtesy of GlaxoSmithKlein, or an asthma education tool. Thank you to all who have put so much effort into incorporating their asthma training in to their schools and completing their goal reports. Congratulations to our winners!

Spring 2004

Wendy Stensrud
Minnetonka Middle School East

Spring 2004

Vicki Sorensen
Clearwater Middle School

Summer 2004

Debrah Vanderkooi
Luverne Public School

Winter 2004

Laura Kramer
Martin County West Public Schools

Coordinator Opportunity

The American Lung Association of MN has an opening for the position of Minnesota Asthma Coalition (MAC) regional coordinator for the metro region. This job is approximately 8 hours per week and involves coalition building, community education, and providing public information about asthma. If you are interested, contact Penny Gottier Fena at penny.fena@alamn.org.

Attention Coaches!

Here is an asthma education program just for you!

If you are an athletic coach or a parent who is a sports coach, please keep your eye on the “Hot Topics” link this fall on the MDH Asthma Web site <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/> for a new online educational program just for coaches (community and school) and referees.

The MDH Asthma program, STEPS to a Healthier Minnesota program, and the Utah Department of Health are working to develop a “Coaches Asthma Clipboard” educational program. This 30-minute on-line educational program will teach the basics of asthma a coach or referee should know when working with athletes of any age or any aerobic sport.

Any athletic coach who successfully completes the 30-minute program will receive a certificate of completion and a “Coaches Asthma Clipboard” with emergency asthma response steps listed. If you have questions, contact Susan K. Ross at susan.ross@health.state.mn.us.

MINNESOTA ASTHMA COALITION UPDATE

Minnesota Asthma Coalition celebrates May as World Asthma Month!

Nick Mueller Asthma Walk

The South Central Minnesota Asthma Coalition (SCMAC) organized the Nick Mueller Asthma Walk to raise money for the Nick Mueller Scholarship Fund and to support asthma education efforts of SCMAC. Nick Mueller was a New Ulm High School student who died last September of a severe asthma attack. The Asthma Walk was in German Park in New Ulm, Minnesota, on Saturday, May 7, 2005. The SCMAC’s members, the Nick Mueller family, volunteers and community participants contributed time and effort to make this event memorable. In the pouring rain, they had over 130 participants and raised more than \$2,500, exceeding their expectations! For more information contact: Erin Simmons, SCMAC Coordinator, 507-381-8257, scasthma@hickory.net.

First Annual Wheezer Walk

The East Central Regional Asthma Coalition held its first annual Wheezer Walk at Fairview Lakes Regional Medical Center in Wyoming, MN on Saturday, May 7, 2005. It was a three-mile walk, health fair, and kite-flying event with food and refreshments to raise the awareness of asthma in the community. Thanks to Heather Steffens for organizing this event and everyone who gave their time and effort to make this event a success. For more information contact: Lori Swanson, ECRAC Coordinator, 320-679-6316, lori.swanson@co.kaabec.mn.us.

There are nine active regional asthma coalitions that bring together individuals and groups to work on asthma in a collaborative approach by promoting awareness, prevention, and culturally sensitive education. To find out more about the coalition in your area, visit www.mnasthma.org, or contact Erin Simmons, MAC statewide coordinator, 507-381-8257 or erin.simmons@alamn.org.

Obesity and Asthma

(continued from page 1)

symptoms that may be related to air pollution. Sports coaches, parents, and children should plan for more frequent rests and remind children to pay attention to how they are feeling. Even if they can't change their schedule or practice, they can change or modify an activity so it's less intense.

To help reduce ozone-forming pollutants in warm weather:

- * Drive less by carpooling, combining errands, and riding the bus or light rail
- * Don't top off your gas tank, which releases extra fumes into the air
- * Refuel after 8 p.m. when it's cooler and less fuel will evaporate
- * Postpone painting projects or working with solvents until it is cooler
- * Reduce electricity use to help cut air pollutants created by power plants

To learn more about air pollution and the AQI, or to sign up for free e-mail alerts, go to:

<http://aqi.pca.state.mn.us/hourly/>

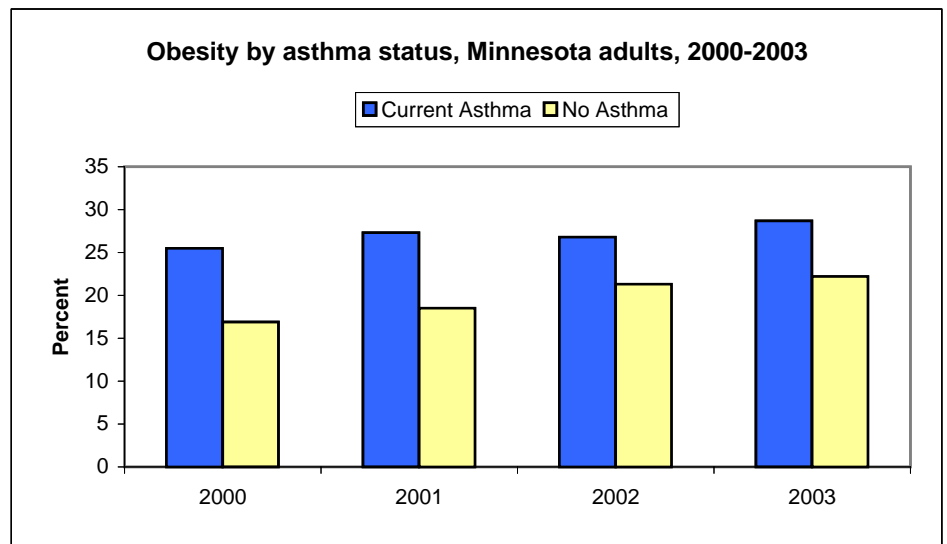
The US Environmental Protection Agency has information for health care providers to help your patients protect their health by reducing exposure to air pollution. For more information go to: <http://www.epa.gov/airnow/health-prof/index.html>

The MDH Asthma Program website has been updated

Visit the Asthma Web site at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/> to see many valuable links, downloadable PDF documents, asthma tools and PowerPoint presentations under the "Educate Yourself," "Health Care Professionals" and "School Health" sections. There is information on asthma and the environment, and links to asthma resources from the National Heart Lung Blood Institute and the California Asthma Public Health Initiative (CA PHI). Also, please view the Governor's proclamation of May 3, 2005, as Asthma Awareness Day.

According to data from Minnesota's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (an annual telephone survey of adults age 18 and over), Minnesota adults who have asthma are more likely to be obese than those who do not have asthma. Because this is a one-time survey, we cannot say for certain whether obese persons are more likely to get asthma or persons with asthma are more likely to be obese. However, current research suggests that obesity does come first; that is, obesity is a risk factor for developing asthma.

Obesity is defined as a body mass index greater than 29 kg/m². Body mass index is based on a person's reported height and weight and equals weight in kilograms divided by the square of the height in meters.



Source: Minnesota Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2003

Occupational Asthma

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Asthma Program is developing a plan to address occupational asthma in Minnesota. We recently added a fact sheet on Work-Related Asthma on our Web site: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/environment.html>.

There was also an article published in the latest issue of Safety Lines, the newsletter of Minnesota OSHA on work-related asthma. That article may be viewed at <http://www.state.mn.us/ebranch/doli/pdf/4705sl.pdf>.

MDH is looking for people to serve on an Occupational Asthma Advisory Work Group. If you are interested or know someone who should be invited, please contact:

The MDH Asthma Program at asthma@health.state.mn.us, or Laura Oatman at laura.oatman@health.state.mn.us.

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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

To receive this newsletter electronically, go to:
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/Newsletter.html>, and click on Subscribe to Breathing Space.

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Questions about lung health?

Call 1-800-548-8252

American Lung Association Call Center

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Asthma Web Site: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/>

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