Tobacco-free St. Paul Saints Game

Minnesotans enjoyed smoke-free air at the St. Paul Saints baseball game on Friday, May 23, 2008. In celebration of Asthma Awareness Month, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), the Metro Regional Asthma Coalition, and six other organizations co-sponsored the game against the Fort Worth Cats at Midway Stadium, Energy Park Drive and Snelling Avenue in St. Paul. The organizations joined forces to raise awareness about asthma and secondhand smoke through trivia, exhibits, on-field activities and announcements at the game.

“Almost 400,000 Minnesotans have asthma, and a large number of people with asthma and other respiratory conditions attended this game,” said Stephanie Kimmes, coordinator of the Metro Region Asthma Coalition, a regional coalition of the statewide Minnesota Asthma Coalition. “We appreciate how cooperative the St. Paul Saints were in agreeing to go smoke-free for this game.” Because people with asthma are very sensitive to the effects of secondhand smoke, the entire stadium was smoke-free for this game.

Asthma School Nursing Awards

The MDH Asthma Program has announced the availability of up to 30 funding awards for Licensed School Nurses (LSNs) who lead an asthma care improvement project during Summer 2008. The project will involve meeting with families with a student with asthma to draft an asthma action plan and to educate them about asthma management.

For details and an application go to: http://www.health.state.mn.us/asthma/school.html. They will be accepted through 5 pm, June 16, 2008. Each grant will be for $1,000. Preference will be given to LSNs who have completed the “Managing Asthma in Minnesota Schools” training.

Camp SuperKids

Camp SuperKids, the ALAMN’s premier camp for children with asthma, 8-13 years of age, and Junior Leaders with asthma 14-16 years of age, is looking for RNs and RTs to serve as cabin leads for the week or half week July 6-11, 2008. The camp is located in Loretto, just 22 miles west of Minneapolis, at YMCA Camp Ihduhapi. Food, lodging and CEUs are provided. Serve as a cabin lead for the week and bring your school-aged child free! For more information, please contact Metro MAC Coordinator, Stephanie Kimmes, at: stephanie.kimmes@alamn.org.

Please share this information!
The Prevalence of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in Minnesota Adults

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, also known as COPD, is a progressive respiratory disease characterized by difficulty exhaling air from the lungs. COPD actually refers to two diseases: emphysema and chronic bronchitis, with progressive asthma as a possible contributing component. Symptoms include shortness of breath, chronic cough and excessive mucus production. Airflow obstruction experienced with COPD is not completely reversible but is treatable with appropriate medications.

An estimated 3% of adults in Minnesota report that they have received a diagnosis of COPD. However, as shown in the accompanying graph, the prevalence of COPD increases dramatically with age, affecting 7.4% of adults 65 and older.

Source: Minnesota Department of Health, 2005
More Protective Air Quality Standards May Mean More Air Quality Alerts in Minnesota

Each spring the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) reminds citizens that April marks the start of the ozone pollution season. In recent years, very few pollution health alerts in Minnesota were called due to ozone levels - most have been caused by fine particle pollution. But this year may be different.

On March 13, 2008, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) adopted new ozone standards and new fine particle pollution (PM2.5) standards. Both new standards are more protective of human health. Both of the stricter standards went into effect May 1, 2008, which coincided with EPA's Air Quality Awareness Week that was observed April 28 through May 2.

It’s likely there will be more Minnesota alerts this year because the standards have been changed to be more protective. The new AQI measurement of 101 for ozone would have been equal to an AQI of 77 with the old guidelines. The new fine particle threshold to trigger an air health alert would have equaled about 88 with the old guidelines. Minnesota’s outdoor air is cleaner than it was 20 years ago. But the stricter standards, improved monitoring equipment, and subsequent air alerts may make people perceive that our air quality has gotten worse.

The MPCA uses the EPA’s color-coded Air Quality Index (AQI), with a 0-500 scale, to convey air quality readings to the public. Air alerts are triggered at 101 (orange) which reaches the “unhealthy for sensitive groups” category. Sensitive groups include senior citizens, young children, anyone with respiratory or heart problems, and anyone who exercises strenuously.

These groups should take it easy and reduce the intensity and duration of physical activities during an alert - walk, don't run, for example. Because ozone is scrubbed out by air conditioning, exercising in an air conditioned environment is preferable to exercising outside during ozone alerts. However, fine particle pollution will not be reduced by air conditioning and indoor levels can be the same or higher than outdoors.

Ozone sensitivity varies, but elevated ozone levels can cause irritation to eyes, nose and throat, and make breathing difficult even in healthy people. High ozone levels can trigger respiratory problems such as asthma and chronic bronchitis attacks in those who already suffer these diseases. Fine particle pollution causes problems and irritations similar to ozone.

Ozone, a colorless and odorless gas, is created when volatile organic compounds (VOCs) mix with nitrogen oxides in hot sunny weather. In Minnesota, that means the ozone season runs April through September. VOCs and nitrogen oxides (and fine particle pollution) are emitted when fossil fuels are burned. Fumes from chemicals and petroleum products can emit VOCs, too. Wood smoke also contains particle pollution.

To reduce ozone and fine particle pollution, citizens can help by reducing electricity use, driving and idling less, refueling vehicles after 8 p.m., limiting the use of paints and solvents, and cutting back on recreational fires. Surprisingly, small gas engines such as gas-powered lawn mowers emit more VOCs per hour than a modern car, because they lack pollution control technology. Consider mowing less often, replacing grass with annuals, or using reel or electric mowers.

Visit the MPCA AQI Web page at http://aqi.pca.state.mn.us/ to check the hourly AQI values, find information on air pollution health effects and to sign up to receive free email air pollution health alerts.

See the Minnesota Department of Health Web site at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/air/index.htm for additional information on air quality health issues.
**Tiotropium**  
(*marketed as Spiriva HandiHaler*)

**Attention:** Pulmonary care health professionals and patients

March 18, 2008 - Boehringer Ingelheim and FDA notified healthcare professionals that ongoing safety monitoring has identified a possible increased risk of stroke in patients who take Spiriva. This product contains tiotropium bromide and is used to treat bronchospasm associated with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Boehringer Ingelheim reported to the FDA that it has conducted an analysis of the safety data from 29 placebo controlled clinical studies ("pooled analysis"). Based on data from these studies, the preliminary estimates of the risk of stroke are 8 patients per 1000 patients treated for one year with Spiriva, and 6 patients per 1000 patients treated for one year with placebo. This means that the estimated excess risk of any type of stroke due to Spiriva is 2 patients for each 1000 patients using Spiriva over a one year period.

It is important to interpret these preliminary results with caution. FDA is working with Boehringer Ingelheim to further evaluate the potential association between Spiriva and stroke. FDA has not confirmed these analyses and while pooled analyses can provide early information about potential safety issues, these analyses have inherent limitations and uncertainty that require further investigation using other data sources. Patients should not stop taking Spiriva HandiHaler before talking to their doctor, if they have questions about this new information. This early communication is in keeping with FDA’s commitment to inform the public about its ongoing safety reviews of drugs.

For more information go to Early Communication about an Ongoing Safety Review of Tiotropium at:  

---

**Singulair (montelukast) - Possible Association Between Use of Singulair and Behavior/Mood Changes, Suicidality, and Suicide**

In late March 2008, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting Program informed healthcare professionals and patients of the Agency's investigation of the possible association between the use of Singulair and behavior/mood changes, suicidality (suicidal thinking and behavior) and suicide. Singulair is a leukotriene receptor antagonist used to treat asthma and the symptoms of allergic rhinitis, and to prevent exercise-induced asthma. Patients should not stop taking Singulair before talking to their doctor if they have questions about the new information. Healthcare professionals and caregivers should monitor patients taking Singulair for suicidality (suicidal thinking and behavior) and changes in behavior and mood.

This early communication is in keeping with FDA's commitment to inform the public about its ongoing safety reviews of drugs. Due to the complexity of the analyses, FDA anticipates that it may take up to 9 months to complete the ongoing evaluations. As soon as this review is complete, FDA will communicate the conclusions and recommendations to the public.

You can read the complete 2008 MedWatch Safety Summary, including a link to the FDA Early Communication about an Ongoing Safety Review regarding this issue at:  
[http://www.fda.gov/medwatch/safety/2008/safety08.htm#Singulair](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch/safety/2008/safety08.htm#Singulair)
Transitioning from CFC to HFA Based Albuterol Inhalers

As of December 31, 2008, all albuterol CFC (chlorofluorocarbon) based MDI (metered-dose inhaler) medications will no longer be available. Instead, patients who use albuterol inhalers should be transitioned to environmentally friendly HFA (hydrofluoroalkane) based albuterol inhalers. CFC and HFA are the chemicals that actually propel the active medication out of the inhaler canister. These propellants are found in almost all MDI (Metered Dose Inhaler) control and rescue type medications.

While the medication inside the HFA inhaler is relatively the same as in the CFC inhalers, there are some differences between the two and you should anticipate this as you transition. Some patients have noticed that the sensation of the HFA spray is less forceful, has a "softer mist" delivery and feels warmer than CFC based inhalers. In addition, HFA's also have a very distinctive taste and require the user to inhale with a slow deep breath.

HFA inhalers also have specific cleaning instructions that should be provided when you pick up your inhaler medication (package insert) or by asking your health care provider. Some of the HFA inhalers require priming up to 4 presses before use and again if the inhaler hasn’t been used for a specific period of time. Check package inserts included with your medication for specific information because each medication can have different instructions. HFA inhalers need to be washed with warm water and air dried once a week. The medication is stickier and can clog the opening, reducing the amount of medication the spray delivers.

In addition to the physical changes of the inhalers, there are cost issues. There currently are no generic brand rescue (albuterol type) inhalers and the cost difference between a CFC based rescue medication and an HFA can be 2-3 times more expensive. There are currently four HFA rescue inhalers on the market and there are differences. They are Ventolin by GlaxoSmithKline, ProAir by Teva, Proventil by Schering-Plough and Xopenex by Sepracor. Xopenex uses a different chemical, levalbuterol and only one inhaler, Ventolin, has a dose counter, which helps users keep track of how much medication is left. ProAir has the softest spray of the current rescue medications. All companies have give-away programs for those in need. There is financial assistance available through Partnership for Prescription Assistance http://pparxmn.org/ or call: 1-888-477-2669.

For more information, go to http://www.fda.gov/cder/mdi/mdifaqs.htm


Both types of asthma inhalers use the drug albuterol. But the newer one (HFA), left, has a softer spray.
On May 23, 2008, the Metro MAC along with 7 other organizations co-sponsored a St. Paul Saints’ game in which the stadium was smoke-free for this game. Over 5,400 fans were reached that Friday night, not to mention any who were listening on the radio. For additional information, see the article on page 1.

Other Event Highlights:
The Metro MAC has been very active this quarter! Partnerships with community organizations in the metro have provided a number of opportunities to increase awareness about asthma. Smoke-Free Washington County’s March newsletter contained an article about the MN Asthma Coalition, asthma and secondhand smoke with a readership of over 7,000, and the coalition wrote an article entitled "Asthma Doesn't Have to Limit Your Exercise Goals" that was in a April "Get Fit, Twin Cities" e-newsletter with almost 8,000 readers.

In May the Metro MAC supported Tobacco-Free Youth Recreation with a letter of support for a tobacco-free parks policy in Brooklyn Park.

March 11 - The Metro MAC co-sponsored a Licensed School Nurse training regarding the 2007 Asthma
Guidelines. Cindy Brady, RN, CPNP, with Children's Respiratory and Critical Care Specialists presented to 50 nurses from metro school districts.

March 10 and April 28 - A total of 42 Dakota County in-home child care providers learned about "Caring for Kids with Asthma" in Apple Valley.

April 29 - "Managing Your Child's Asthma" presentation was provided for 47 teaching staff at Valley Crossing Elementary school in Woodbury.

May 15 and May 21 - Asthma brown bag sessions were provided for 13 Dakota County employees at the Western Services Center in Apple Valley and 11 Dakota County employees at the Hastings Services Center in Hastings.

**Upcoming Events:**

June 7, 2008: Asthma Walk on Boom Island in Minneapolis.

July 22, 2008: "Caring for Kids with Asthma" training to Hennepin County foster care providers to be held at Northpoint Clinic in Minneapolis from 9-11 a.m.

August 12, 2008: Asthma presentation to teachers in Anoka-Hennepin school district

August 18, 2008: 2007 Asthma Guidelines presentation to South Washington County school district health staff

September 8, 2008: The next Metro MAC meeting will be held at the ALAMN, 490 Concordia Ave., in St. Paul

For additional information on Metro MAC activities, please contact Stephanie Kimmes at stephanie.kimmes@alamn.org.

**Southwest Regional Asthma Coalition (SWRAC)**

Event Highlights:

Thank you to Dr. Amy Ellingson for providing continuing education on the updates of the Asthma Management Guidelines. She has most recently been out to the Medical Clinics in Redwood Falls, Hendricks, and Worthington.

The Family Asthma Event was held on May 5 at the Willmar YMCA. The families who attended had lots of fun, and they also received education on inhaler techniques, asthma management, and warning signs. Pizza and pop were served and the night wrapped up with a swim in the pool. Fun was had by all! Thank you to all those who helped coordinate the event!

**Upcoming Events:**

On Thursday, June 5, a Multicultural Fair will take place in Willmar. Families will have the opportunity to find information on various health topics, to include asthma and good asthma management.

LOOKING for new members!
If you have an interest in the topic of asthma and would like to help others, then the Southwest Regional Asthma Coalition is the group to join! We are on the lookout for new members to join our group and offer some fresh ideas. Contact Amy Roggenbuck, the Regional Coordinator, if you would like to sign up!

If you have any questions or would like more details regarding any future SWRAC Events, please contact Amy Roggenbuck, Coordinator at: aaroggen@farmerstel.net.

**Southeast Regional Asthma Coalition (SERAC)**

Events:

A new regional coordinator will be starting in June. If you would like to contact the new coordinator or would like additional information on future Southeast RAC activities, contact Jill Heins Nesvold at 651-223-9578 or Jill.Heins@alamn.org.
Event Highlights:
West Central Coalition members were very busy in April and May!

March 8 - Vickie Haberman had a table and poster board up at the Parents Health Fair in Fargo, ND. Vickie was there to answer questions and provide asthma education to families. There were approximately 500 participants.

March 15 - Ruth Tollefson and Doreen Hanson had a table and poster board at the Perham Community Health Fair. Several people stopped by to ask questions and pick up educational brochures and pamphlets.

March 17 - The WCRAC held a meeting at the Lake Region Hospital in Fergus Falls, this meeting was also available via teleconference. The group viewed a presentation on the new asthma guidelines, and we made plans for promoting asthma in May.

March 28 - Dr. Graft conducted a presentation at the Alexandria Clinic on the new asthma guidelines.

April 30 - Ruth Tollefson RN, AE-C, from the Alexandria Clinic and Dave Holm, Respiratory Therapist from Douglas County Hospital, and Doreen Hanson, PHN and WCRAC Coordinator, went on the radio, KXRA, in Alexandria. The group was interviewed on "Open Line" to discuss asthma; listeners were invited to call in with questions.

May 13 - Barb Heier PA gave the Caring for Kids with Asthma presentation to a group of day care providers in Perham, MN.

Also in May Shelly Svec and Ruth Tollefson gave packets of asthma information to local day care providers.

The May “Toilet Paper” newsletter, also known as “The John” is posted on the inside of public restroom stalls to educate people about asthma while they rest there in Douglas County and also in Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Grant Counties.

If you live and work in a county where these are not already posted or in a county where they are but not at your work place, please contact Doreen Hanson at doreen.hanson@mail.co.douglas.mn.us or 320-762-3043.

Upcoming Events:
June 25, 2008: Next coalition meeting will be at 10:00 am at the Lake Regional Hospital in Fergus Falls. This meeting will also be available via teleconference.

If you are interested in future events in the West Central Region or are interested in joining the coalition, please contact Doreen Hanson at 320-762-3043 or doreen.hanson@mail.co.douglas.mn.us.

Event Highlights:
A lot of exciting events took place in the Northeast Region in April and May!

March 7 - A “Caring for Kids with Asthma” presentation was given to 50 Head Start teachers in Virginia, MN.

April 15-16 - An Asthma Educator Institute was held in Duluth with over 60 people attending.

May 2 & 3 - Approximately 10 pharmacists attended a training called “Providing Asthma-Specific Medication Therapy Management” in Duluth. Molly Ekstrand, RPH, AE-C, conducted the free trainings.
Coalition activity for Asthma Awareness Month included the promotion of the Coach’s Asthma Clipboard Program (www.winningwithasthma.com). Nearly 200 postcards were distributed to area coaches.

**Upcoming Events:**
The coalition will continue to promote asthma camp and the Coach’s Asthma Clipboard Program at health fairs.

July 14, 2008, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m., quarterly coalition meeting will take place at:
St. Mary’s Medical Center
Regional Heart Center Conference Room
407 E. 3rd Street
Duluth, MN 55805

To join by phone, call the conference call-in line at: 1-866-394-4146, code: 11153687.

If you have any questions or would like more details regarding any future events, please contact Jan Salo Korby at jan.salo.korby@alamn.org or (218) 726-4721.

For more information contact Kathleen Milligan at kathleen.milligan@allina.com.

**Northwest Regional Asthma Coalition (NWRAC)**

**Events:**
If you are interested in future events in the Northwest region, or know someone who might be interested in a coordinator position, please contact Erica Fishman at Erica.fishman@health.state.mn.us or 651-201-5899.

**South Central Regional Asthma Coalition (SCRAC)**

**Events:**
A new regional coordinator will be starting in June. If you would like to contact the new coordinator or would like additional information on future activities, please contact Erica Fishman at Erica.fishman@health.state.mn.us or 651-201-5899.

**Central Minnesota Regional Asthma Coalition (CMRAC)**

**Event Highlights:**
April 24, 2008, the Central Region Coalition hosted the third annual Central Minnesota Asthma Coalition at the St. Cloud Radisson Hotel. Guest speaker was Dr. Steven Kuracheck and the topic of his lecture was "Recent Advancements in the Treatments of Asthma. Thirty four family medicine physicians, pediatricians, allergists, nurse practitioners, nurses and Coalition members attended the event. Planning has already begun for next year’s lecture.

**Upcoming Events:**
September 20, 2008, the Fourth Annual Abbott Northwestern’s Sartell Outpatient Center Walk Run for Asthma. Registration for the race is $15 with all proceeds going to the Central Region Minnesota Asthma Coalition.
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 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.

Questions about lung health?
Call 1-800-548-8252
American Lung Association Call Center

MDH Asthma Staff Contact Information:
Asthma Program Telephone Number: 651-201-5909
Toll Free Number: 1-877-925-4189
Asthma Web Site: http://www.health.state.mn.us/asthma/

Wendy Brunner, 651-201-5895, email: wendy.brunner@state.mn.us
Erin Fishman, 651-201-5899, email: erica.fishman@state.mn.us
Janet Keysser, 651-201-5691, email: janet.keysser@state.mn.us
Laura Oatman, 651-201-5914, email: laura.oatman@state.mn.us
Susan Ross, 651-201-5629, email: susan.ross@state.mn.us
Janis Smith, 651-201-5909, email: janis.smith@state.mn.us