

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



Pinellas County Health Department

Steps to a HealthierFL-Pinellas County

Asthma And School

Plan for Attendance

For most students, missing a few days of the school year is no big deal. However, for children with a chronic health condition, frequent absenteeism becomes a major problem that compounds itself with each passing school year.

Students with asthma and allergies may miss school due to medical appointments, preventive evaluations, or treatments, as well as illness. Therefore, teachers and parents should establish plans for keeping up with daily classroom assignments at the beginning of the school year. Students should not be penalized for missing deadlines or failing to attend a sufficient number of school days if illness is the cause.

One aspect of school absenteeism is entirely preventable and almost never considered: children with asthma who are forced to go to the clinic every time a medication is needed. Some children must use medication three or four times a day. A child who leaves the classroom for one dose of medication per day loses an additional 11 days over the course of the school year!

Teaching children how to use medicines properly and permitting them to carry inhaled medications throughout the day will eliminate this problem. Discuss this with school officials and your physician. Also, talk with your doctor about medication options. Some medicines require fewer doses per day than others.

http://www.aanma.org/schoolhouse/sh_planattend.htm

When should a child with asthma go to school?

It can often be difficult to decide whether or not an asthmatic child should go to school. The following guidelines are suggested by the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Immunologic Diseases at Georgetown University, Washington, DC:

Your child can go to school with:

- ◆ a stuffy nose, but no wheezing
- ◆ mild wheezing that clears after medication
- ◆ the ability to do usual daily activities
- ◆ no difficulty breathing

Keep your child home if they have:

- ◆ evidence of infection, sore throat, or swollen, painful neck glands
- ◆ a fever over 100 degrees F, orally; face hot and flushed
- ◆ wheezing that continues to be labored one hour after medicine is given
- ◆ weakness or tiredness that makes it hard to take part in usual daily activities
- ◆ difficulty breathing

Your child's peak flow meter reading can also help you decide. A lower-than-normal reading, coupled with other early warning signals (such as a chronic cough or pale skin color), may be a sign that an asthma attack is imminent. Parents should medicate their children as instructed by the physician and base their decision to send the child to school on the child's response to the medications.

Good communication among the teacher, parent and child will enable the child to attend school on marginal days. Notify the teacher that your child is in pre-asthma stages but controlled with medications. If possible or indicated, go to the school to check on your child just before the next medication is due. A quick assessment with the peak flow meter and listening to the child's



Keeping Healthy at School

Parents: Do Your Homework

- Complete all necessary school forms.
- Type or neatly write emergency instructions. Include known asthma triggers and early warning signals

with specific information on when to call for help. If your child uses a peak flow meter, indicate the normal peak expiratory flow rates along with green, yellow, and red zones. List medications identifying the correct names, the dosages, when each should be used, and expected results. Include your physician's phone number.

- List home and work phone numbers of both parents on the emergency care card and pager or cell phone numbers if appropriate. Also, list two backup people in case primary contacts are unavailable. Make sure each backup has written instructions detailing what to do if your child has an emergency.
- Leave a set of medications at school with full instructions about their use. Follow school regulations carefully; generally they require you deliver unopened medications with prescription information intact. If your child is allowed to carry his own medications, make sure all necessary permission forms are filled out, then provide the school with a backup set of medications.
- Label all medications and equipment with the student's name and appropriate use.
- Update information as necessary



http://www.aanma.org/schoolhouse/sh_parents.htm

Asthma Resources

If you would like to speak with an asthma expert, contact one of the toll free hotlines listed below:

Allergy and Asthma Network

Mothers of Asthmatics
1-800-878-4403



American Lung Association

1-800-586-4872 or
www.lungusa.org/local

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

1-800-727-8463 (7 a.m. until midnight)

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides free materials to help you learn more about controlling indoor asthma triggers: www.epa.gov/asthma or call 1-800-438-4318.

U.S. Environmental Agency and the Ad Council:

1-866-NO-ATTACKS or www.noattacks.org. You can download a **funbook** with games for your child at this site that will teach all about asthma.

Parent and Community Asthma Coalition:

PARAT (Pediatric Asthma Resource Action Team)
727-767-4188

**In South Pinellas County the
Steps to a Healthier Florida program
offers free outpatient Asthma Care
Coordination through All Children's
Hospital. Call Omar Zidi at 727-767-4376.**

**For a free home inspection to assist in
identifying triggers in your home,
call Stan at 727-507-4336, ext. 1336.**

(this is a voluntary program, offering
suggestions and recommendations only.
Available in most areas of South Pinellas Co.)



For information about **Steps to a HealthierFL-Pinellas County**
visit our website: www.StepsFL.com
or call 727-820-4113

Funding for this newsletter was supported by Program Announcement Number 03135 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Health and Human Services, or the U.S. government.