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Allergy & Asthma Adventures

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Parent tips:
Helping your child manage asthma at school.

Well controlled asthma is important so your child is not missing school and able to participate in activities. Keep in mind that your child's asthma can be triggered at school. Asthma problems tend to reach a peak about the third week of September. Taking the following steps at the start of the school year can help your child manage asthma at school.

- Inform the school and your child's teachers about your child's asthma.
- A school nurse may contact you at the start of the school year to make a school health plan for your child.
- Meet with the teacher to discuss your child's asthma symptoms and medicines.
- Talk about your child's asthma triggers. Visit the classroom to identify any potential triggers.
- If your child has a pet allergy ask that pets not be brought into the classroom.
- If your child has a pollen allergy ask the teacher to keep windows closed when pollen counts are high or on windy days.
- Ask about field trips that may affect your child's asthma. Most trips can be safe with good planning.
- Ask to be notified if they notice frequent coughing during the day, asthma symptoms after recess or during gym.
- Check the school policy to see if your child can keep their Reliever medicine and they can take it whenever needed.
- Label your child's asthma medicines with their names and number of doses needed.
- Explain when the medicine should be used and show how to use the medicines correctly.
- Your child may feel uncomfortable using their puffers in front of others. Talk with your child's teacher about allowing your child to take their asthma medicines in private (going into hallway or to the office).
- Make sure your child knows when they should use their Reliever and the importance of letting you know if they need it while they were at school.

Keeping asthma in good control is important, so that your child does not have any missed school days due to asthma problems and is able to participate in all school activities.

The Hidden Impact of Asthma

Good asthma control is the goal! Good asthma control means that a child can sleep at night without coughing, rarely needs to take their Reliever inhaler and can be as active as their peers without having asthma symptoms. Unless a child is having obvious trouble with their asthma, they will often answer "no" to usual questions such as "Have you wheezed or coughed or used your blue puffer today?" This can lead to the assumption that asthma is well controlled and has little impact on your child's daily life. However, "no" may not accurately describe the full impact of asthma on your child.

Children learn to adapt to asthma symptoms. Some may either "tough out" the chest tightness and the cough or may choose activities to avoid uncomfortable asthma symptoms, often without discussing symptoms with their caregivers. In fact, we found that even children with a perfect Asthma Control Score report frequent symptoms during more casual discussions AND describe restricting certain physical activities in order to avoid symptoms. A survey done by the educators at the Children's Allergy and Asthma Education Centre showed that more than half of children with asthma have difficulties in gym class and consider themselves "unable to run". Yet, less than one third of parents are aware of this. Do you really know the impact of asthma on your child's daily life?

See below for a fun questionnaire that kids and parents can complete and then discuss.

Parent tips:
Sending your Food Allergic Child to School

In general, families have a lot of control over reducing risk in their own home, but need to think about assessing and reducing risk in other places. No school can guarantee an “allergen free” environment. Banning specific foods can give a false sense of security and may be difficult to enforce. However, risk reduction is essential and schools must be “allergen aware.” They must have a plan that reduces risk for each food allergic child. How this will be managed will depend on different things (e.g. child’s age, allergen, school structure & staffing). Careful supervision is expected in the early school years. As children get older, supervision decreases and children need skills to make good food allergy decisions for themselves.

In Manitoba, there is legislation that says schools must have an anaphylaxis plan for children. Schools can obtain funding from URIS (Unified Referral and Intake System), a provincial program, to have a registered nurse ensure the school has an anaphylaxis plan for a child who has severe food allergies. The nurse will also train school staff yearly on management including how to use the auto-injector.

Policies that relate to food allergy may vary a bit amongst school divisions or even from school to school within a division. Parents need to be aware of their school’s policies, and if concerned about a policy, they should talk with the teacher and principal.

Prepare ahead

Don’t assume that a daycare or school has all the correct information. Talk to the people caring for your child (e.g. teacher, daycare teacher, lunch supervisor, principal). Find out how they keep other food allergic children safe. Ask if food or snacks are served. Find out who monitors the lunchroom. Ask about their emergency plan and find out where the auto-injector is kept.

Have childcare staff make you aware of any special events (e.g. birthdays, bake sales, holiday celebrations, field trips) to allow for planning.

Provide information

Provide basic information to other people caring for your child. This includes the child’s allergen, what is safe to eat, signs of anaphylaxis and how to respond. Show them how to use the auto-injector and have them practice with the trainer. They need to understand the seriousness of the allergy. Part of providing information may include helping to educate other children in the class.

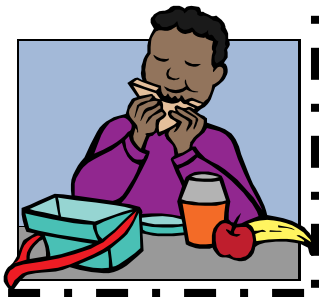
A MedicAlert® bracelet is helpful for school age children. Check with your child’s school to see if they are part of MedicAlert®’s “No Child Without” program. If so, your child can get a bracelet at no cost. A food allergy badge may be helpful for daycare.

Day cares and schools may have different policies about where medicines are kept. The EpiPen® or Allerject™ must be easy to access. Caregivers must know when to use it, how to use it and be prepared to use it. The auto-injector must not be out-dated. Make sure you know the expiry date and replace the auto-injector when necessary.

For more information check out:

Anaphylaxis Canada’s Back to school checklist
http://www.anaphylaxis.ca/files/BacktoSchoolChecklist%20Parents.pdf

http://www.foodallergy.org/managing-food-allergies/at-school

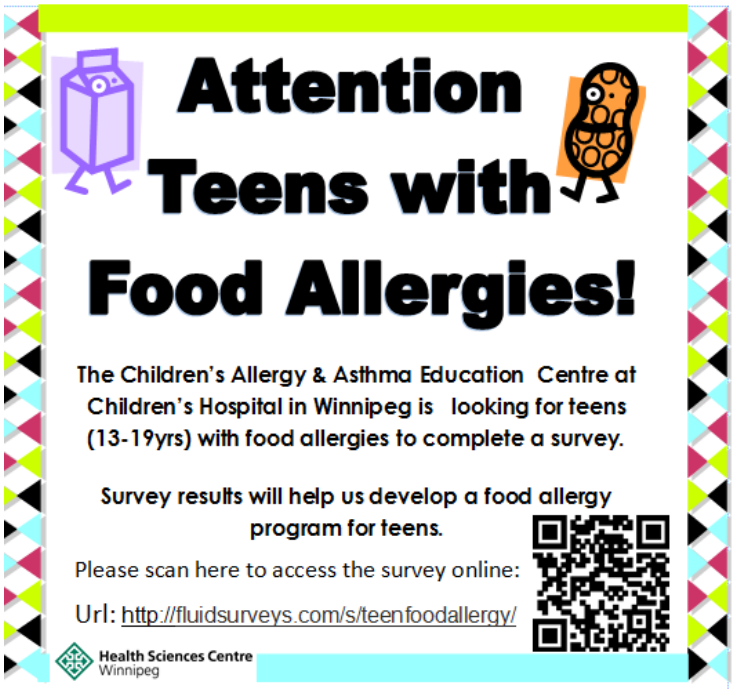


FREE

Upcoming Asthma Education Classes

Call early as registration is limited!

Fall 2014		
LESS THAN 3 **Parents Only** Wednesday, Oct 15 & 22	Age of Child: Under 3 yrs. old	7:00 pm to 8:30 pm
PRESCHOOL **Parents Only** Tuesday, Oct 7 & 14	3 – 6 yrs. old	7:00 pm to 8:30 pm
SCHOOL AGE **Parents and Kids** Saturday, Oct 4 & 11	7 – 11 yrs. old	10:00 am to 11:30 am
TEENS **Teens Only** Wednesday, Nov 5 & 12	12 – 16 yrs. old	6:30 pm to 8:30 pm Dinner provided



After completing the survey, teens will have the chance to enter a draw to win 1 of 2 Amazon Gift Cards!

FREE

Upcoming Food Allergy Education Classes

Call early as registration is limited!

7 and under Parents Only (2 classes)	Times	Age of the child
Tuesday, Sept 16 & 23 Thursday, Oct 9 & 17 Saturday, Nov 15 & 22	7:00 pm to 8:30 pm 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm 10:00 am to 11:30 am	**Under 7 years** **For Parents** **(Grandparents welcome)**
School age classes **Parents and children** Saturday, Sept 20 & 27 Saturday, November 1 & 8	10:00 am to 12:00 pm	**Parents and children** **7 - 11 years** **attend together**