



Fair Lawn Nurses

# Nurse's Newsletter

## ASTHMA

### What is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease. While there is no cure, there are treatments available and the disease can normally be managed.

Asthmatics can be more sensitive to environmental irritants and their immune systems overcompensate by causing **swollen lungs** and too much mucus. This is inflammation.

Narrowing of the lungs, or constriction, often occurs alongside inflammation. The sensation of a tight chest occurs as the chest muscles squeeze together already narrowed airways, further causing air struggles.

Airway inflammation and constriction combine to create asthma symptoms:

- \*Wheezing – a whistling sound heard when breathing in or out.
- \***Coughing** – as the chest muscles attempt to loosen the mucus
- \*Chest Tightness – as caused by the constriction
- \*Shortness of Breath – sensing you cannot get adequate air/oxygen

### What are Asthma Triggers?

Asthma triggers are the very things which cause a person's asthma to get worse. Everyone's triggers are individual and an affected person should do his best to avoid what irritates him. Some common triggers are:

- \*Exercise
- \*Cold air, Weather Changes
- \*Molds

- \*Viral infections, Cold, Flu
- \*Pests, Dust Mites, Dust
- \* Pollen, Furry or Feathered Pets
- \*Strong odors
- \*Cigarette Smoke

### What are Treatment Options?

Some medications are taken daily on a long-term basis in an effort to prevent a problem. Other medications are only used during an asthma attack and are known as **quick relief/rescue meds**. Quick relief drugs work by relaxing the muscles surrounding the lungs to allow for improved air flow.

Inhalers are easy to use and carry. A doctor will prescribe the exact medication and number of puffs. A nebulizer requires a portable machine to cause the medication to bubble up through a tube connected to either a mouth piece or a mask attached to the person's face.

### Asthma in School

Parents of active asthmatics should provide medication, medical orders and an asthma action plan.

Teachers may help too:

- \*Limit classroom pets (or apply strict cleanliness standards & hand washing).
- \*Keep room clean. Report signs of pests.
- \*Avoid working with strong odors.
- \*Maintain proper heating and ventilation.
- \*BE OBSERVANT!! Get child help quickly.