

ALERT

Find out more... visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org

SMOKING & ASTHMA by Autumn Clos, MD

The relationship between tobacco smoke and asthma is a complex one. Given the nature of asthma it may be hard to show hard evidence on why a person develops the disease or the exact causes of an attack. However, there have been many research studies linking tobacco smoke to increased asthma symptoms and attacks both for smokers and non-smokers.

Major research studies have found that parental smoking is linked with increased occurrence of asthma in children. Among those already diagnosed with asthma, parental smoking is linked with more severe disease. There is also ample data showing that infants whose mothers smoked during pregnancy have a higher risk of developing asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

The number of people with asthma, especially children, has increased significantly over the last two to three decades, and the rise is not simply due to better recognition of the problem. Possible reasons for the increase include:

- ▶ An increase in smoking by women during pregnancy
- ▶ Children's exposure to passive smoking
- ▶ Increased exposure to indoor allergens (e.g. dust mites)
- ▶ Outdoor air pollution (e.g. smog)
- ▶ Changes in diet, particularly a diet lacking in fruits and vegetables

It is likely that no one single factor is the sole cause, and the increase is probably due to a combination of these and other factors that have not yet been identified.

The link between smoking and asthma has been the focus of several recent studies. Researchers in Finland found that people exposed to tobacco smoke in the workplace were twice as likely to develop asthma as those who were not exposed¹. Another study² found that more than a third of asthmatics treated in the emergency room were smokers, and nearly a quarter were former smokers. European researchers have found that smokers with asthma may not respond as well to treatment with oral³ or inhaled⁴ steroids as non-smokers with asthma.

Smokers can ask their doctors for help in quitting, and may call for a free Quit Kit from the Michigan Department of Community Health at 1-800-537-5666. Whether you have asthma or not, it's always best to avoid second-hand smoke. Keep your home and car smoke-free zones, and call your local American Lung Association office (1-800-LUNG-USA) to find ways to protect yourself and others from tobacco smoke.

Sources:

1. American Journal of Public Health, Dec. 2003; 93 (12); 2055-2060.
2. Chest, May 2003; (123); 1472-1479.
3. American Journal of Respiratory Critical Care Medicine, Dec. 2003; 168 (11); 1308-1311.
4. American Journal of Respiratory Critical Care, May 2003; 153 (5); 1519-1529.

Dr. Clos is a pediatric pulmonary specialist practicing in Lansing. She also serves as co-chair of the Mid-Michigan Asthma Coalition.

The number of people with asthma, especially children, has increased significantly over the last two to three decades, and the rise is not simply due to better recognition of the problem.



- ⊗ Among Michigan's high school children, it is estimated that 21.6% were established smokers in 2001.¹
- ⊗ For the general population of adults in Michigan in 2001, 26.1% were current smokers.²
- ⊗ Among Michigan adults with current asthma in 2001, 30.5% were current smokers, 26.0% were former smokers, and 43.5% had never smoked.²
- ⊗ In 2001, more adults with current asthma smoked than those in the general population.²

Sources:

1. Youth Tobacco Survey, 2001
2. Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 2001.



ASTHMA COALITION COLUMN



Michigan Asthma Resource Kit (MARK) Ready

The Michigan Asthma Resource Kit (MARK), a tool kit with resources and information to assist health care professionals in caring for people who have asthma, is now available. The Kit was developed in accordance with the NHLBI asthma guidelines, and is divided into three sections:

Professional section: the most recent NHLBI asthma guidelines, asthma action plans, tools for assessment and diagnosis, tips for working with patients from diverse cultures, and scientific resources and references

Patient section: patient education materials and reproducible handouts

Local resources section: information about local asthma coalitions and related community services

A multidisciplinary team within the Asthma Initiative of Michigan (AIM), developed the MARK. Team members include practicing physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, asthma educators, public health professionals and pharmacists.

The MARK has been designed to save time for physicians and office staff. It's also flexible, so that it can be used to deliver asthma education to a newly diagnosed patient, mail topic-specific education sheets to supplement telephone advice, and provide training for new or existing office staff members.

The MARK is currently being distributed by local asthma coalitions across the state- click on Coalitions at www.GetAsthmaHelp.org or call 1-866-395-8647 to find the one nearest to you. The Kit is also available online at www.GetAsthmaHelp.org.

Please direct questions and comments about this newsletter to:

MI Asthma Communication Network
c/o American Lung Assoc. of Michigan
403 Seymour Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933-1179
phone: 1-866-395-8647
e-mail: info@GetAsthmaHelp.org



SPRING ASTHMA TIP: Asthma on Vacation

Some travelers find their asthma symptoms improve away from home, others find they worsen. Either way, planning ahead can help you to adjust to your new surroundings.

Take a little more medication than you think you'll need, and keep it with you in your carry-on bag.

Carry a written report with your medical history, the severity of your asthma and what treatment you need in case of a medical emergency with you at all times.

It's best to have your asthma under control before you leave home. Ask your doctor to update your Asthma Management Plan so you know how to control and treat your asthma- just in case.



ASTHMA EDUCATOR UPDATE

Still need to take the asthma educator certification exam? Is the fee stopping you? Watch the NAECB website (www.naecb.org) for news about upcoming Linda Ford, MD scholarships.

Visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org for more information about asthma events & trainings in your area.

MI ASTHMA CALENDAR

April

- 14- National Asthma Conference, Atlanta Marriott Marquis Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia
- 16 For more info: www.signup4.com/CDC/ASTHMA2004
- 22 Northern Michigan Asthma Symposium, Traverse City Country Club, free- but must pre-register, 5:30 to 8 p.m. For more info: 231-935-6546
- 23 Summit of Michigan Asthma Coalitions, Henry Center for Executive Development, Lansing, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., free, for more info: 517-484-7206
- 28 Inpatient/Bedside Tobacco Cessation Program Training, 1000 Monroe NE, Grand Rapids, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more info call Tobacco Free Partners: 616-732-6262

May

- 6 World Asthma Day Event, "New" Detroit Science Center, Detroit, 4 to 7 p.m., free, for more info: 248-557-8050
- 11 2004 Chronic Disease & Prevention Management Conference
Lansing Center, Lansing, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., For more info: 517-663-5147



Support the American Lung Association of Michigan in May ... to find a Blow the Whistle on Asthma Walk near you, call 1-800-LUNG USA