

ALERT

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THE MYTH OF OUTGROWING ASTHMA by Paul S. Judge, MD

There are a lot of myths and rumors about asthma. People with asthma, their families and even people who work in the health care field can have the wrong information. One very common myth that can prove to be very dangerous is that children can outgrow their asthma.

Fact: Asthma is a chronic (or lifelong) disease. It does not go away as a person ages. Asthma causes tightened airway muscles, inflamed (swollen) airway linings, and too much mucus to be produced in the lungs when someone with asthma comes in contact with certain triggers.

Like most myths, outgrowing asthma is based on a little bit of truth. According to research studies, some adults who reported having childhood asthma say that they do not have any symptoms as adults. As some children with asthma grow up and the time between asthma symptoms gets longer, they wrongly believe that their asthma is gone. Asthma does not go away. If someone has asthma as a child, then he/she still has asthma as an adult. Even without symptoms, the lungs are still very sensitive. The asthma should be thought of as "in remission," not outgrown.

As an adult, lungs and airways are bigger. That means that when a child grows into adulthood, at some point the narrowing and inflammation of the airways may not result in symptoms. But there is a danger of permanent damage and airway remodeling, if airways are irritated and untreated for a long time, whether or not symptoms are present.

A 2005 study followed 900 children with mild to moderate asthma. They found that some kids were more likely to than others to go into asthma remission, including kids whose blood tests show fewer allergy markers as they get older, those with good lung function on testing, and those with less need for daily asthma medicines to control their asthma. Long-term use of asthma drugs, even inhaled steroids, was found to have no effect on asthma remission.

Whatever the reason for fewer symptoms as adults, it is important to remember that serious asthma attacks can still happen. Many people who end up in the emergency room or hospitalized for asthma report having had mild or no recent symptoms, but an asthma emergency happened when they were exposed to a certain trigger. No matter what, if diagnosed with asthma, you should always work with your doctor or certified asthma educator to make an asthma action plan, and carry asthma rescue medication at all times. Visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org for more information and facts about asthma.



Sources:

1. Denoon, Daniel. "Will Your Child Outgrow Asthma." WebMD Medical News . March 2005. Accessed April 2007, <<http://www.webmd.com/content/Article/102/106723.htm>>.

Dr. Paul S. Judge is an allergy, asthma, and immunology specialist at the Allergy, Asthma & Sinus Centers in Saint Joseph and Benton Harbor, Michigan. Dr. Judge is an active member of the Southwestern Asthma Coalition

There are a lot of myths and rumors about asthma. One very common myth that can prove to be very dangerous is that children can outgrow their asthma.



MICHIGAN S T H M F A C T S

Among Michigan children (2-18 years) who died due to asthma (2002-2005), 44% lived with a smoker and 70% had an emergency department visit for asthma in the year prior to death.

Among Michigan young adults (19-34 years) who died due to asthma (2002-2005), 43% were current smokers and 68% had an emergency department visit in the year prior to death.

Lack of adherence to asthma management techniques, including overuse of rescue medication and elimination of asthma triggers, is the primary causal factor for asthma death among Michigan children and young adults (2-34 years).

For more information about the Michigan Asthma Mortality Review and complete results from the project, please visit <http://www.getasthmahelp.org/reports.asp> for the latest report.

ASTHMA COALITION UPDATES



**World Asthma Day
May 1st, 2007**

May 1st is World Asthma Day. World Asthma Day is an international event began by the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA), in a project conducted in collaboration with the NHLBI. It was designed to increase awareness of asthma as a global health problem. People around the world are working together to take action to increase public awareness of the burden of asthma and promote better asthma diagnosis and treatment.

Asthma ranks among the most common chronic health conditions in the United States. The disease affects more than 20 million Americans. For over two decades now, rates of asthma prevalence, deaths, hospitalizations, and emergency department visits have been increasing worldwide. In the U.S. The problem is especially noticeable among African Americans and children.

Public officials, health organizations, asthma coalitions, and patient groups in countries throughout the world have also joined the cause and participate to host special community activities all month in May.

Locally, asthma coalitions in Michigan have been working hard and planning events throughout the state. Events will be held all month. For more information about the coalitions, activities and events near you, please visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org for the latest updates.



Please direct questions and comments about this newsletter to:

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c/o American Lung Assoc. of Michigan
403 Seymour Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933-1179
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e-mail: info@GetAsthmaHelp.org

SPRING ASTHMA TIP: Asthma and Gardening

It's finally springtime and while trees are budding, people are sneezing and wheezing. Michigan trees such **Elm, Maple, Alder, Birch, Oak,** and **Hickory** are the culprits for the rush of spring symptoms. They produce small light and dry pollen that are adapted to fly in the air (and into your nose) easily. But there are some simple solutions that you and your family can use to enjoy the sunny weather of Spring

- ✓ Keep your house and car windows closed in to prevent pollens or molds from flying into your home.
- ✓ Garden when pollen counts are lower, such as in the evening or after a rainfall. When you work in the garden, protect yourself by wearing gloves, long sleeves, glasses, a hat, and a paper dust mask.
- ✓ Wash your clothes (or toss them into a hamper) when you come in and be sure to shower and wash your hair before bed. This will help you keep allergens out of your home.
- ✓ Also, keep track of daily pollen and mold counts during peak seasons. Visit www.Pollen.com for the latest pollen counts in your area.



ASTHMA EDUCATOR UPDATE:

The Environmental and Medical Department at MSU is hosting free Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits online. The course topics include work-related asthma and asthma mortality. Visit <http://oem.msu.edu/cme.asp> for more information.

MI ASTHMA CALENDAR



May

- 3 **Detroit Environmental Justice & Children's Health Forum**, UM Detroit Center, Detroit 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., for more info: 313-866-0547
- 5,12 **Free Asthma Screening**, Detroit, Flint and Spring Lake, time varies depending on location, for more info: www.acaa.org/public/lifeQuality/nasp/locations.htm
- 10 **The Diagnosis & Treatment of Asthma in the Elderly**, Great Wolf Lodge, Traverse City, 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., free but must pre-register, for more info: 231-935-6546
- 16 **Addressing Asthma in your Community**, St. Paul Cathedral, Detroit 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., free but must pre-register, for more info: 888-673-2544
- 19 **ABC's of Asthma-Asthma Basics and Control Class**, Children's Hospital of Michigan, Detroit, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., free, but must pre-register, for more info: 888-444-0333
- 22 **Asthma Information Review Course**, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Ann Arbor, \$85 for practitioners, \$45 for students, for more info: 734-677-6772

June

- 11 **Asthma Information Review Course**, Mercy Hospital Grayling, Grayling, \$85 for practitioners, \$45 for students, for more info: 734-677-6772



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 or visit www.asthmawalk.org