

# AIM ALERT

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## Asthma & Ozone by Mary Lee Hultin, M.S., R.S.

Knowing what might trigger an asthma attack and avoiding it helps people with asthma keep their asthma under control. It may be as simple as avoiding furry pets, tobacco smoke or certain cleaning products. But what if the air outside holds the trigger that causes asthma symptoms?

Ground-level ozone, sometimes referred to as smog, is created when a mixture of air pollutants from vehicles reacts with oxygen and "bakes" in the hot, summer sun. Ozone can cause a variety of health problems in otherwise healthy people. Ozone can trigger asthma attacks, and may also lead to the development of asthma in previously healthy people exercising vigorously outdoors, especially children. Children are especially sensitive to it because they spend more time and are more active outdoors than adults, have a higher breathing rate and narrower airways. Ozone is one of the toughest pollution problems, especially in big cities where there are more vehicles and other sources of pollutants.

Limiting exposure to air pollution can be an important part of an asthma action plan. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) keeps tabs on local air quality across the country through its daily [Air Quality Index](#), which measures levels of five major air pollutants. [Sign up for Enviro Flash](#), a no-cost service that automatically delivers air quality forecasts directly to subscribers. It provides "heads up" information so people can adjust their daily activities to match expected air quality conditions. Signing up for Enviro-Flash is easy and limits the number of emails/texts to a level you select.



In addition, everyone can do their part to bring ozone levels down:

- Carpool, bus, walk or bicycle to work; find other ways to reduce car use. Fill the car's gas tank in the evening, and keep it maintained to manufacturer's specifications and proper tire pressure.
- Postpone mowing the lawn on high ozone days; keep grass cut at a higher cut level (3 inches); consider purchasing an electric lawnmower when it's time to replace the old one.
- Consider a highly fuel-efficient hybrid and ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) or consider purchasing an alternative fueled vehicle (AFV) that uses 85% ethanol (E85) or natural gas when a new vehicle is needed.

Although ozone is often impossible to see or taste, it can have a real impact on health. Everyone can help make sure their actions are helping to reduce ozone air pollution, and help keep us all breathing easier.

Mary Lee Hultin is a Toxicologist with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Air Quality Division. Mary Lee serves as a statewide technical specialist on children's environmental health and has a specialty in air quality and asthma for the state's air toxics program. She has over 25 years of experience in the field of environmental toxicology with the past 18 in air quality.



## Quick Links

[AIM Website - GetAsthmaHelp.org](#)

[Michigan EnviroFlash Program](#)

[New Safety Requirements for LABAs](#)

[EPA Air Quality Index](#)

[AIM Event Calendar](#)

## New Safety Requirements for LABAs

Due to safety concerns, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is requiring changes to how long-acting inhaled medications called Long-Acting Beta-Agonists (LABAs) are used in the treatment of asthma. These changes are based on FDA's analyses of studies showing an increased risk of severe exacerbation of asthma symptoms, leading to hospitalizations in pediatric and adult patients as well as death in some patients using LABAs for the treatment of asthma.

LABAs are approved as single-ingredient products (Serevent and Foradil) and as an ingredient in combination products containing inhaled corticosteroids (Advair and Symbicort) for the treatment of asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). They work by relaxing muscles in the airway and lungs. This helps patients breathe easier, and lessens symptoms such as wheezing and shortness of breath. The new recommendations only apply to the use of LABAs in the treatment of asthma.

To ensure the safe use of these products:

- The use of LABAs is contraindicated without the use of an asthma controller medication such as an inhaled corticosteroid. Single-ingredient LABAs should only be used in combination with an asthma controller medication; they should not be used alone.

- LABAs should only be used long-term in patients whose asthma cannot be adequately controlled on asthma controller medications.
- LABAs should be used for the shortest duration of time required to achieve control of asthma symptoms and discontinued, if possible, once asthma control is achieved. Patients should then be maintained on an asthma controller medication.
- Pediatric and adolescent patients who require the addition of a LABA to an inhaled corticosteroid should use a combination product containing both an inhaled corticosteroid and a LABA, to ensure compliance with both medications.

FDA has determined that the benefits of LABAs in improving asthma symptoms outweigh the potential risks when used appropriately with an asthma controller medication in patients who need the addition of LABAs. FDA believes the safety measures recommended above will improve the safe use of these drugs. Additional information about the use of LABAs in asthma, for both patients and providers, is available at the [FDA website](#).

## Michigan Asthma Calendar

### May

5 Detroit Alliance for Asthma Awareness celebrates World Asthma Day, Childrens Hospital of Michigan- Detroit Medical Center, Detroit, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. For more info: 313.819.4641

20 Asthma 123 facilitator training, Mich. Public Health Institute, Okemos, 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more info: [Patty Inman](#), 810.953.3951

26 AIM Partnership Forum, Lansing Comm. College West, Lansing, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more info: [John Dowling](#), 517.335.9713

### June

17-18 EPA Asthma Forum, Grand Hyatt Hotel, Washington D.C. [EPA Forum website](#)

26 Jackson Asthma Coalition Golf Outing, Concord Hills Golf Course, Concord, fundraiser for Camp Michi-Mac, 10 a.m. start, \$65 for 18 holes plus food. For more info: [April Allen](#), 517.841.7905

26~ July 2 Camp Michi-Mac for children with asthma, YMCA Storer Camp, Jackson. For more info: [Mary Hagan](#), 1.866.MICHI-MAC

Please direct questions and comments about this newsletter to the Michigan Asthma Communication Network, Michigan Dept. of Community Health, 517.335.9463 or [VorceT@michigan.gov](mailto:VorceT@michigan.gov)

[Contact the Asthma Initiative of Michigan](#)