

ALERT

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HEAT, A GENTLE BREEZE & A WHEEZE by Rich Badics

Sunshine, blue skies and temperatures over 90 degrees with a gentle breeze. To most of us, this sounds like the perfect summer day for yard work or recreation in Michigan. But for people with asthma or other respiratory problems, this may be a recipe for a miserable day due to high ozone levels.

Although ozone is often impossible to see, smell or taste, it can have a real impact on your health. Healthy people, as well as those with respiratory diseases, can have breathing problems when ozone levels are high. Outdoor work or exercise when ozone levels are high increases the amount of ozone inhaled. This may cause harm to the lungs and respiratory system. Typical symptoms include shortness of breath, chest pain, wheezing and coughing.

Children are more sensitive to the bad health effects of ozone pollution because they spend more time outdoors than adults, are frequently more physically active, have a higher breathing rate than adults, have smaller airways than adults, and have more respiratory infections. Older adults and people who already have other respiratory diseases, such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema, may also be more sensitive to high ozone levels.

Ground-level ozone, sometimes referred to as "smog," is created when a mixture of air pollutants bake in the hot, summer sun. Ozone forms in the atmosphere when sunlight and high temperatures act on carbon-based chemicals known as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that combine with a group of air pollutants called nitrogen oxides (NOx). Sources of VOCs and NOx include large industrial operations, coal-fired power plants and transportation. Activities you should refrain from doing on ozone action days include fueling your car and using boats and lawn mowers, because they contribute to ozone formation. You should do these activities in the early morning or evening, instead.

Prevention is a key part of keeping asthma under control. Here are some tips to help prevent asthma flare-ups due to ozone:

- ▶ In west and southeast Michigan, state agencies will use TV and radio to notify citizens of ozone alerts. On an *Ozone Action Day*, people with asthma should limit their outdoor activities.
- ▶ Check the daily ozone levels (adjusted every 2 hours) on the Internet by visiting www.deq.state.mi.us/aqi/aqi.shtml
- ▶ On days when ozone levels are high, consider changing or limiting outdoor activities as much as possible to the afternoon and early evening.
- ▶ Always keep your quick-relief medication handy in case of unexpected symptoms.

The American Lung Association's State of the Air: 2003 Report shows that more than 17 counties (where ozone monitors are located) in Michigan have problems with smog. Go to www.lungusa.org/air to view the report, and to find out how to improve the air you breathe.

Work with your health care provider to find your summer asthma triggers. Make a useful Asthma Action Plan together so you can enjoy a great Michigan summer! ☀

Rich Badics is the Program Coordinator for the Environmental Health Division at the Washtenaw County Department of Environmental Regulation



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- ☀ During the summer months, the average rate of asthma hospitalization among Michigan children less than 18 years is 3.6 per 10,000 population.¹
- ☀ Studies show that high ozone levels are associated with more hospitalizations and emergency room visits for asthma, and the risk is much greater for cigarette smokers.²
- ☀ Between 1999 and 2001, Michigan had a total of 373 days with unhealthy ozone levels (8-hour \geq 0.085 ppm) in 20 counties that measure ozone.³

1. Source: Michigan Inpatient Database (1997-2001), Bureau of Epidemiology, Michigan Department of Community Health, Asthma hospitalization defined as a primary discharge diagnosis of Asthma, ICD-9-CM = 493.XX.

2. Hannaway PJ. Asthma - An Emerging Epidemic. Massachusetts: Lighthouse Press, 2002.

3. American Lung Association, State of the Air: 2003.

ASTHMA COALITION COLUMN



Focus on: Jackson Asthma Coalition

The Jackson Asthma Coalition (JAC) is one of 13 independent asthma coalitions in Michigan.

It was first formed in 1999, and membership now consists of nearly 30 dedicated and diverse members. They meet monthly to discuss asthma issues, identify barriers, and plan educational offerings for people living with asthma in the Jackson area.

In the past year, the JAC has sponsored asthma events and resources for both health professionals and the public. They worked in schools to promote asthma awareness and to educate staff, parents and students. The JAC has also provided assistance with medications, free asthma education, and supplies to underserved asthma patients in their area.

They plan to continue to serve their community in the future, and will soon begin a quality improvement asthma project with local insurance and hospital partners.

Rhonda Nall, the coordinator for the JAC, sees the benefits from their work. "We're seeing signs that our community is beginning to understand the burden of asthma and proper management practices. It's exciting how we are becoming the go-to group for information on asthma in the Jackson area."

Want to find out more about Jackson Asthma Coalition? Need to find an asthma coalition near you? Visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org and click on Coalitions. ☀



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
phone: 1-866-395-8647
e-mail: info@GetAsthmaHelp.org



SUMMER TECHNIQUE TIP: Ready, Set, Go... to School!

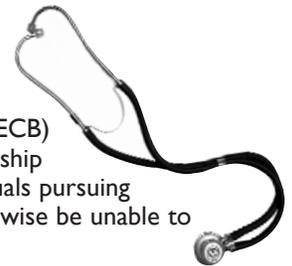
As the ozone levels rise and the school year gets nearer, parents need to plan ahead to keep their kids' asthma under control:

- Make an appointment with your asthma doctor to review your child's Asthma Action Plan, and ask about a flu shot
- Get an extra quick-relief inhaler to keep with the student (if possible)
- Visit your child's classroom(s) to identify triggers and speak with school staff about your child's asthma needs

ASTHMA EDUCATOR UPDATE

The National Asthma Educator Certification Board (NAECB) recently announced the creation of the Linda B. Ford scholarship for asthma educators. This scholarship is available to individuals pursuing their national asthma educator certification who might otherwise be unable to afford the examination fee.

The award is named after Linda B. Ford, M.D., the first chair and a founding member of the NAECB, to honor her hard work, dedication, and passion for the development of the national asthma educator certification examination. Visit www.naecb.org to find details about the scholarship, and to see a list of certified asthma educators in the United States. ☀



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

MI ASTHMA CALENDAR

July

- 16- Asthma Survivor Camp, St. Mary's Education Center, Alpena, ages 8-11, free, space is limited, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. For more info: 1-800-942-8601

August

- 1 Asthma Information Review (AIR) course, Monroe Community College, Monroe, 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more info: 734-677-6772
- 25 Summit of Asthma Coalitions, Henry Center for Exec. Development, Lansing, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more info: 517-484-7206

September

- 10 Hurley Medical Center 2003 Asthma Conference, for physicians, Hill Road Holiday Inn, Flint, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more info: 810-762-7283
- 18 Asthma Information Review (AIR) course, Crystal Mountain Resort, Thompsonville, 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more info: 734-677-6772