Back to School, Already? How to Make Sure Your Child is Ready!

By Brad Schneider, MD
Family Medicine Residency Program

While most children are currently on summer vacation, the return to school, at least for school aged children, is rapidly approaching. With this comes a change in the season, a change in allergens, and a whole new spectrum of health challenges. To help you successfully navigate this transition, take a look at some of the helpful tips listed below:

- Make sure your child has an Asthma Action Plan. The school should have a copy in the office. To get an Asthma Action Plan, make an appointment with your health care provider before going back to school.
- Make sure the school has your child’s inhalers and other medications on hand for use while at school.
- Notify the teachers and coaches about your child’s asthma and required medications.
- Contact your physician about restarting these medications if your child has been off them over the summer prior to going back to school.
- Make sure your child’s asthma is well controlled. If your child is using his or her rescue inhaler more than 2 times a week, their asthma may not be well controlled. To prevent missed school days, discuss with your child’s primary care physician options for better controlling your child’s asthma.

Other Helpful Back to School Information:

- Notify the school if your child has any severe environmental allergies or food allergies. If they have had a life threatening reaction to any allergens, make sure your child has an Epi Pen on hand at all times.
- Give your child the best chance of succeeding by making sure he or she is up to date with all of their routine medical care.
- Schedule: Vision/Eye Doctor Appointments, Dentist Appointments, and Primary Care Physician Appointments.
- Make sure your child is getting 8 or more hours of sleep each night.
- Provide a well-balanced and healthy breakfast for your child every morning.
Check out the Pollen Count everyday!
Get an up to date pollen count for your area from the National Allergy Bureau at www.aaaai.org or the National Pollen Forecast Line at (800) 976-5536 or visit www.pollen.com.

Rainy days or days with little or no wind are better for outdoor activity because pollen and mold spores are less likely to become airborne.

How asthma friendly is your child’s school?
Many different things go into making the classroom environment asthma friendly. This quiz will help you decide how asthma friendly your child’s school really is. Take the asthma friendly school quiz and if you have any concerns, talk it over with your child's teacher or school administrator. Our children spend a great deal of time in school and at school related activities. We owe it to them to make sure they attend school in asthma friendly environments.

Q: Is your child's school smoke free, including school-sponsored events like football games?
Q: Does your child's classroom have any items that could trigger asthma like furred pets, fish tanks or lots of dust?
Q: Does your child have the chance to take an easier physical education classes if their asthma requires it?
Q: Does your child's school allow students to carry their own asthma medications and use them as needed?
Q: Does your child's school use harsh cleaning products?
Q: Have the teachers at your child's school been educated about asthma?
Q: Does your child's school educate all students about asthma, and how to help students who have asthma?
Q: Are teachers and students allowed to wear perfumes or colognes?

What is the September Epidemic?
More children are admitted to the hospital for asthma attacks in September than any other month. It is believed to be caused by the change of season, exposure to other children who have colds and the arrival of cold and the flu season.

If your child is on a maintenance medication for asthma, make sure to restart it at least 2 weeks before the start of school.

Ask the Nurses

Vicki Lauffer (left) & Maria Rexroad (right)

Q. Is there a cure for asthma and eczema?
A. The answer is no, but many treatments are available to make it easier for the very many people who have these diseases! Asthma can be controlled, but can not be cured!

Q. What are some Emollients (Creams) I can use for eczema?
A. There are many types of creams and lotions some “runny” and some thick. The difference is the amount of oil to the amount of water. The more greasy and thick the better and longer it works. A few examples are Eucerin, Nivea and Cetaphil Lotion.

Eczema

Having eczema can sometimes make your life just plain “miserable.” People with eczema can have red, dry skin with itching and sleepless nights!! Remember you are not alone. Millions of people like you have this skin condition.

Eczema can be found on the hands, behind the knees on elbows or your ears after wearing earrings. The itching from eczema is hard to cope with. You may feel itchy most of the time and worse at night. It can make you feel grumpy and tired and even have trouble thinking. Eczema may make the skin red and blotchy. You may feel worried about the way you look. If this bothers you talk to someone about this.

Most people with eczema have “atopic eczema” or childhood eczema. Someone else in the family may have eczema too. You may have asthma or hay fever because they are part of the same group of conditions. When your asthma is under good control the eczema may get better.

Another type of eczema is “contact eczema” or contact dermatitis. It is caused by something that touches the skin and makes it red, dry and itchy. Try to find the things that irritate the skin and avoid them when you can.
What can be done to control eczema?

- The most important thing to do is use emollients every single day! Emollients are special skin creams that keep the water in your skin. They keep the skin soft, smooth and less itchy.
- Avoid hot showers.
- Use a special shower gel instead of normal soaps.
- Pat your skin dry….NEVER rub the skin.
- Keep a diary of scratching, sleep and foods you eat over four to six weeks. This diary may help find the problem food.
- Avoid triggers like wool and polyester clothing. Always wash new clothing before you wear them.
- Avoid overheating and sweating!
- Apply a barrier cream before swimming. Sometimes chlorine can make eczema worse.
- Rinse well in the shower right after swimming and apply cream to trap moisture in the skin.

When your eczema gets worse, topical steroid creams and some non steroid creams may be ordered by the doctor. Antihistamines can help lessen the itching. Remember you are not alone and there is help for you by learning about your eczema and how to make it better!

Did You Know?

Tobacco is a powerful trigger of asthma symptoms and harms children with asthma even more than adults.

Around 80% of children with asthma also have allergies. The fall season is particularly difficult because of ragweed pollen and mold spores.

Cherries, grapes and watermelons don’t ripen after picking.

Sample Asthma Action Plan for Students Ages 5 & Up

Q. Should every child have an Asthma Action Plan?

A. Yes. Here is a generic action plan for students and children. You should talk any asthma action plan over with your doctor. The best plan is one customized for you with help from your doctor or health care provider.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Parent/Guardian Name(s):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Name:</td>
<td>Mother Home #, Work #, Cell #:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOB:</td>
<td>Father Home #, Work #, Cell #:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade:</td>
<td>Personal Best Peak Flow Result:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Room #:</td>
<td>(This is a good time to reevaluate your child’s personal best).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asthma Severity:</td>
<td>Peak Flow ___ Times per Day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Name:</td>
<td>List of Medications:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Phone:</td>
<td>Drug Name, Dosage, and Frequency:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Green Zone - Peak Flow of 80% - 100% of</td>
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<td>Personal Best, ___ to ___</td>
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Color the Picture!