



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
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Commissioner

DOHMH Advisory #39: Health Department Urges Health Care Providers to Help Children Prepare for the Fall Asthma Season

September 9, 2008

- **Childhood asthma often worsens in the fall with hospitalization rates more than tripling from summertime lows.**
- **In anticipation of this year's asthma upsurge, the Health Department is urging health care providers to schedule check-ups for children with asthma, and make sure that they are on the right treatment. Inhaled Corticosteroids are the most effective treatment for children with persistent asthma.**

Dear Colleagues:

Every year, September and October bring a surge in asthma hospitalizations and emergency department visits, especially among children. Illness rates can increase three-fold from summertime lows. (See figure).

A medical regimen that achieves good control during the summer months may not be sufficient to prevent exacerbation of asthma related to fall asthma triggers. Inhaled Corticosteroids (ICS) are the most effective treatment for persistent asthma. Providers can work with children and parents now to make sure that they are on the most effective treatment, and control asthma as the peak season begins.

Medical providers should:

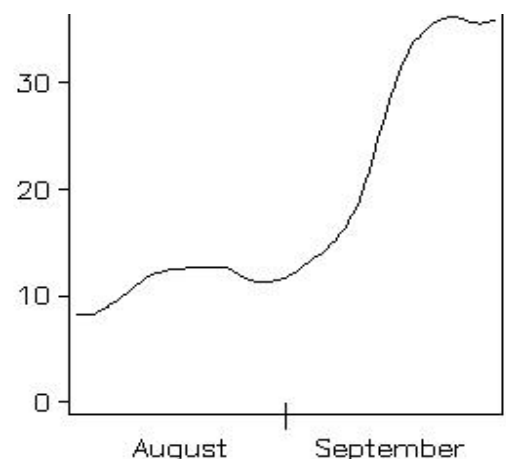
- Ensure that children with persistent asthma are on ICS as per the NHLBI guidelines¹.
- Make sure children are prescribed spacers with their inhalers, and review inhalation technique and spacer use.
- Make sure that all school-aged children with asthma have a *Medication Administration Form* (MAF) for medication services at school, and an *Asthma Action Plan* for everyday management.
- Review asthma triggers and develop an individual trigger avoidance plan.
- Administer a flu vaccine.

Providers should also think about ways to improve their current system of identifying and following-up with their population of patients with persistent asthma. An electronic health record system (EHR) can improve adherence to best practice guidelines and can help providers identify patients in need of outreach. The Primary Care Information Project (PCIP) helps providers pay for and implement an EHR system. Visit www.health.nyc.gov/pcip For more information about asthma among NYC children and for provider asthma training, call 311.

Thank you,

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Hospital admissions for asthma, New York City children age 2-17, daily average by date, 2000-2005



¹ Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/asthma/index.htm>