

Patient Update

Tips to reduce asthma attacks this summer

For many people, summer means being outside, enjoying warm weather and being with family and friends. However, there are certain environmental hazards for people with asthma.

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that affects more than 20 million Americans. Asthma occurs when the main air passages of the lungs, the bronchial tubes, become inflamed. The muscles of the bronchial walls tighten and extra mucus is produced, causing the airways to narrow.

The result could range from a frequent tendency for a cough, to wheezing or severe difficulty in breathing. In some cases, breathing may be so labored that an asthma attack becomes life-threatening.

Approximately 60% of asthma attacks are caused by environmental allergens and irritants such as smoke, pollen and animal dander. Below are a few tips to help reduce attacks caused by environmental allergens and irritants this summer:

- Watch for changing weather conditions such as ozone alerts, changes in temperature, humidity, barometric pressure or strong winds that can aggravate asthma.
- Minimize strenuous physical activity outdoors on days when temperatures are excessively high. Sports that require short bursts of energy, such as baseball, football, wrestling, golfing, gymnastics, swimming, walking or hiking, are less likely to trigger asthma. People with exercise-induced asthma (EIA) should not stop exercising. Many asthmatics have found that with proper training and medical treatment, they are able to reduce the symptoms of EIA.
- Take medications as prescribed by your allergist/immunologist in the recommended dosage. Do not take more medication to ease severe symptoms without

consulting with your physician first.

- Use an air conditioner in both your home and car to keep air clean, cool and dry.
- Sit far away from smoke created by campfires or someone who is smoking.
- Do not stand directly behind cars that are running; exhaust fumes could trigger an asthma attack.
- Air out tents/tree houses or other confined places where mold, a common allergen, could be found.
- Shower and wash your hair every night before going to bed to remove allergens from your hair and avoid getting them on your pillow.
- Leave tennis shoes outside before you come in the house. You'll avoid tracking pollen indoors.

Asthma is a chronic disease, and requires continuous management and appropriate treatment. You and your physician can work together on these goals to ensure that your asthma is well-managed. Having asthma should not stop you from participating in normal activities.