2017 Advisory #33:
Health Department reminds health care providers to help children prepare for the fall asthma season

September 14, 2017

Childhood asthma often worsens in the fall, coinciding with the start of the school year. Health care providers can help prevent asthma exacerbations, hospital visits and school absences by optimizing asthma management in children now.

- Schedule a visit for children with asthma to review symptom frequency, adjust medications and develop or update a written asthma action plan.
- Prescribe inhaled corticosteroids for children with persistent asthma.
- Complete an Asthma Medication Administration Form for school-aged children.
- Review asthma triggers and discuss avoidance strategies.
- Administer influenza vaccine.

Dear Colleagues:

Each fall, child asthma hospitalizations and emergency department visits surge, with emergency department visits nearly five times higher than summertime lows, peaking about two weeks after public schools open (Figure 1). A medical regimen that achieves symptom control during the summer months may not effectively prevent exacerbations related to fall asthma triggers. Authorizing in-school administration of asthma medications can improve asthma symptoms.¹

As school opens this fall, medical providers should:

- Schedule a visit to evaluate patients’ current asthma symptoms and adjust therapy accordingly.
  - Use your electronic health record system (EHR) to generate patient outreach lists and create asthma-specific order sets.
- Prescribe inhaled corticosteroids to children with persistent asthma.²
- Create or update an Asthma Action Plan.
- Complete an Asthma Medication Administration Form (MAF) for school-aged children. **School health staff can only administer asthma medications when authorized with a signed MAF.**
  - Authorize albuterol administration for all school-aged children with asthma.
  - Authorize administration of inhaled corticosteroids for patients with poorly controlled asthma and with adherence problems.
  - If you have questions about school services for children with asthma, email OSH@health.nyc.gov.
- Review asthma triggers and discuss avoidance strategies.
- Administer influenza vaccine annually and discuss the importance of prompt treatment of influenza.

Thank you,

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References


To explore neighborhood-level asthma rates among public school children, visit the Environment & Health Data Portal.