

THE ALLERGY & ASTHMA CLINIC

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NEWSLETTER

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It's back to school time. Be prepared to get a good start for this academic year!

Heading back to school is an exciting time for most students and parents. However, for parents of children with allergies, it can be a time of anxiety and fear.

The school environment exposes students to many allergy and asthma triggers. The challenges of school life frequently add additional stress that can aggravate allergies and asthma. And, for those with food allergies, dining at school or on campus can seem like a minefield.

These may seem like daunting hurdles to overcome. But with a little planning, prevention and preparedness, it can be accomplished successfully. If you have teens, start working with them now so they can successfully transition from high school to college and at the same time take a more active role in managing their health. Studies have shown that young people are more likely than others to take risks with their health. For example, one study found that many young people with food allergies have eaten a food even though they know that it contains an allergen. As responsible parents, it is time to educate your children about their allergies and what measures to take to prevent reactions and to keep them healthy and safe. Inform your teens that taking control of their health and being prepared for emergencies will help them manage their asthma and allergies and give you some peace of mind.

Cooperation is the key. Parents, school officials and teachers should work together to create a safe environment for students with allergies. Depending on your child's allergic condition, you may want to consider the following:

- Tour the school to identify potential asthma or allergy triggers.

- Talk with your child's teacher(s) and other relevant school personnel (such as sports coaches and school nurses) about your child's condition, food allergies and treatment plan.

- If your child is at risk for life-threatening reactions, such as those to food or insect stings, complete an Anaphylaxis Action Plan and show school staff how to administer autoinjectable epinephrine and provide them with a doctor's note to allow your child to take emergency medication at school.

- Send safe snacks with your child for classroom parties. Or, ask the teacher to limit goodies to stickers, pencils and other non-food treats.

- Keep in mind the most common asthma and allergy triggers in the classroom include: dust mites, mold, chalk dust, animal dander.

Recess, gym class and after-school sports may be a favorite time of the school day for many children but for those with allergies or asthma it can be a war zone of potential triggers. You may want to consider signing up for regular pollen count email alerts with the National Allergy Bureau so you can plan accordingly if your child takes medication to control symptoms.

Children with exercise-induced asthma may complain about participating in physical activities. However, it is very important for children to stay active, so work with our staff to develop strategies to keep your child symptom-free while exercising. You may want to consider the following:

- Using a short-acting inhaler 15 minutes prior to exercise.

- Drinking plenty of water before, during and after exercise.

- Choosing sports that are less likely to trigger symptoms.

It is particularly exciting for students to go off to college because it marks the beginning of adulthood and it may be the

first time they will be living independently. Here are some additional tips for the college bound:

- Keep prescriptions filled and up-to-date.
- Always have your medications on hand, including your autoinjectable epinephrine and quick-relief inhaler.

- Be aware of signs that you need to seek medical attention.

- Consider talking to your friends and roommates about your allergies and asthma. Letting those close to you know about your health and the signs of a medical emergency can help you stay safe.

- When you arrive on campus, meet with staff, especially food service personnel and residence hall advisors, to develop a plan to control your allergies and asthma.

Has your family been on vacation and taken a holiday from their allergy treatments?

Now is the time to restart their preventative treatment so your child is prepared for the upcoming school year. If their medications no longer seem to work or they have let their immunotherapy lapse, it is time to talk with us about getting back on track for school. As we noted in earlier newsletters, although allergy shots remain the gold standard, sublingual drops can be a very effective alternative, especially for those patients who can't or won't take allergy injections. Allergy drops have proven very successful with many of our patients and are very easy to incorporate into a child or teen's busy schedule.

We can help you create an effective treatment plan for your child's allergy problems. Our professional staff will give you the information you need to choose the right treatment that will help your youngster feel better and perform at their best. Give us a call and let us help you get your child off to a great start in the new school year