

SPRING E-LETTER

DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE ASTHMA?

By Susan Smiley, M.D.

Asthma is a common lung condition seen in children of all ages. Most of the time children with asthma feel just fine. But, during an asthma "attack", children have difficulty breathing.

There are 3 main causes of an asthma attack: the muscles that line the airways "tighten" (airway constriction), the airways become "swollen" (inflammation), and thick mucus fills the airways. Airway constriction and inflammation lead to the symptoms of an asthma attack. Symptoms of an asthma attack include: cough, wheezing, chest tightness and shortness of breath. Quick acting bronchodilators in the form of a nebulizer or inhaler are used to treat an asthma attack.

An asthma attack is triggered by something that irritates the airways. Each child has a different "trigger". It is important to learn what triggers your child's asthma. Avoiding these triggers may help prevent an asthma attack. Common triggers include: smoke, upper respiratory infections, exercise, strong odors, allergens (dust, pollen), and weather changes.

There is no cure for asthma. But, asthma can be treated. There are 2 main types of medicines used to treat asthma.

1. Albuterol and Xopenex are "bronchodilators". These medicines help relax the muscles lining the airways. These medicines are used during an asthma attack to relieve cough, shortness of breath and wheezing.
2. Flovent and Pulmicort are medicines which decrease the swelling and inflammation of the airways. Because children with asthma have swelling and inflammation of their airways even when not having an asthma attack. These medicines are to be used daily.

If you think your child has asthma or would like to discuss your child's asthma treatment plan, please schedule an appointment with one of our GPAM providers. (770-995-0823).

If your child is on an inhaler or nebulizer and continues to have symptoms of wheezing, shortness of breath, frequent coughing or chest tightness more than twice a week; they need to see their pediatrician, allergist or pulmonologist on a regular basis. Preventative care is the best when treating children with asthma. If your child has wheezing in the spring and fall - schedule a visit BEFORE the season arrives. You can schedule with GPAM by calling 770-995-0823 or online.