Get Kids with Asthma Ready for Summer Camp

Every summer, millions of children go off to camp. Your child with asthma can go to camp too, and be safe and happy there. All you need to do is prepare first.

Tips for Camp Preparation

Take these steps before your child leaves for camp:

- **Talk** with your child’s doctor about a plan to manage his or her asthma at camp. Ask for written instructions for:
  - Your child’s medicines and inhalers.
  - Any limits on physical activity.
  - What steps to take in an emergency.
- **Give** the camp director a copy of the plan before camp begins. Include your child’s medical history, and the name and contact information for his or her doctor.
- **Ask** the director if any camp activities might be risky for children with asthma.
- **Make** sure you and your child understand who will be in charge of storing and giving medicine to your child. Teach your child how and when to use any emergency medicines.

Asthma Camp: An Exciting Option

Another camp option for your child is asthma camp. At asthma camp, kids have a lot of fun and get a great camp experience while learning how to better manage their asthma. Children learn how to recognize triggers, how to take their medication, and how to relax and control their breathing. Learning and playing with other children who have asthma can build self-esteem and confidence, too.

Camp AsthmaCadabra is an overnight camp for children who have asthma, cosponsored by the American Lung Association and the Max & Lorraine Foundation. The camp will run from July 30 to August 2 at the YMCAs Camp Kresge in White Haven, Pennsylvania. Camp AsthmaCadabra is for boys and girls ages 7 to 12.

The emphasis at Camp AsthmaCadabra is to help children better understand their asthma. In addition to asthma-friendly summer activities like swimming, boating, arts, and crafts, campers participate in educational sessions on asthma and how it affects them.

Camp AsthmaCadabra is a great place to make friends, have a wonderful camping experience, and learn more about asthma in a fun atmosphere. An experienced and knowledgeable medical staff of doctors, nurses, and respiratory therapists will be on site 24 hours a day.

Mark your calendar for this exciting opportunity for your child with asthma! Learn more or register online by visiting www.campasthmacadabra.org and clicking on “campers.” The preregistration deadline is June 15.

in this issue

2 Should You See an Allergist?
2 When It Comes to Your Asthma, Have a Plan
3 Tune in to the Weather Forecast to Beat Your Asthma
You probably already talk with your doctor often about your asthma. But if your main doctor is a primary care doctor, you might want to add an allergist to your health care team.

About half of asthma cases are allergic rather than non-allergic. This means your body makes a harmful antibody when you inhale certain particles. For this form of asthma, an allergist can help you identify and avoid your triggers. These may include pet dander or pollen. He or she might also give you special shots to increase your immunity to allergens.

Experts also recommend that you see an allergist if:

- You need to confirm your diagnosis.
- Your symptoms get worse after you get a new pet or during certain seasons.
- Your asthma doesn’t respond to treatment.
- You take asthma medicines daily, or have trouble taking them as prescribed.
- You want an asthma action plan, which can help you take control of your disease between doctor visits.

Allergists complete at least two years of special training to treat allergies and other immune system problems. Studies show that patients who work with an allergist to manage their asthma:

- Are less likely to visit the hospital or have unscheduled doctor visits.
- Have better control of their condition.
- Have less chance of asthma affecting their daily lives.

You may also want to see an allergist if you’re pregnant or planning a pregnancy. The allergist can help you reduce your child’s future risk for asthma and allergies. He or she can also give advice on concerns like how Lamaze breathing exercises may affect your asthma or tell you which medications you should stop taking while expecting.

---

WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR ASTHMA, HAVE A PLAN

If you have an asthma flare-up, an asthma action plan can help you decide what medicines to take, when to take them, how much to take, and when to get help. Most plans are divided into three sections based on symptom severity:

- **Green Zone (No Symptoms):** You are breathing well and can do your usual activities. Take your long-term preventive medicine, as usual.

- **Yellow Zone (Flare-up):** You have coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, or shortness of breath. You can do some, but not all, of your usual activities. Take a quick-relief medicine. Your plan will show how much and how often.

- **Red Zone (Serious Flare-up):** You are very short of breath. You cannot do your usual activities. Yellow-zone medicines have not helped. Take the medicines indicated on your action plan. If you do not improve after 15 minutes, go to the hospital or call for an ambulance.

If you don’t have an asthma action plan, work with your doctor to develop one. You can find samples online, which you can print out and fill in with your doctor’s help. Go to www.nhlbi.nih.gov and type “asthma action plan” into the search box.
TUNE IN TO THE WEATHER FORECAST TO BEAT YOUR ASTHMA

Summer often seems like the perfect season, but some summer weather can worsen symptoms of asthma, such as wheezing and coughing, and trigger an asthma attack. For example, weather conditions such as high humidity, strong winds, and thunderstorms can increase the amount of outdoor airborne allergens, like pollen and mold. Spring weather conditions also can affect the level of certain air pollutants like ozone, which irritate the lungs and make it hard to breathe.

Even though you can’t control the weather, you can take steps to control your asthma by tuning in to the weather forecast. Daily weather reports provide important information about local pollen and mold counts and also the daily Air Quality Index, or AQI. This update measures the amount of pollution in the air, especially ozone, and can alert you to “ozone action days,” when ozone levels are unhealthy for people with asthma.

When allergen levels are high or when your local weather forecast issues an ozone action day:

• Stay indoors or reduce your outdoor activity.
• Keep windows closed in your home and car. If you have air conditioning, use it.
• Avoid outside yard work. If you must work outdoors, wear a face mask.
• Bathe after you come inside to wash off allergens on your skin and in your hair.

An Overview of Corticosteroids

Long-term control medications help keep your asthma under control and reduce your chance of having a flare-up. Corticosteroids, which are anti-inflammatories, prevent or reduce airway inflammation. When used as recommended by your doctor, they can help you manage symptoms and prevent attacks.

Only your doctor can prescribe any of these medications. Talk with your doctor about the possible side effects and drug or food interactions of any medication you use.

Corticosteroids are taken in three ways:

With an inhaler. Examples of these include beclomethasone (Beclovent, Vanceril), budesonide (Pulmicort), flunisolide (AeroBid), fluticasone (Flovent), and triamcinolone (Azmacort). Unless you’re using a dry-powder inhaler, use a spacer for these medications. Gargle and rinse your mouth with water after you use the inhaler to help prevent side effects, which can include hoarseness, dry mouth, fungal mouth infections, and headache.

As a nasal spray. These include triamcinolone (Nasacort), Mometasone furoate (Nasonex), fluticasone (Flonase, Flounce, Veramyst), beclomethasone (Beconase, Vancenase), flunisolide (Nasalide), budesonide (Rhinocort), and ciclesonide (Omnaris). Before using this medicine, clear the nasal passages by blowing your nose. Then, with the nosepiece inserted into the nostril, aim the spray towards the inner corner of the eye. Possible side effects can include dryness, burning, sneezing, and headaches. Nosebleeds are uncommon, but should be reported to your doctor immediately if they occur.

Swallowed. These include prednisone (Deltasone), methylprednisolone (Medrol), and prednisolone (Prelone, Pediapred). Side effects for this type can include acne, weight gain, mood changes, high blood pressure, and stomach, eye, or bone problems. If stopped too quickly or used for a long time, serious side effects may occur.
Need Hospital Care? Get the Facts First

When you or someone you care about needs hospital care, how do you go about selecting the highest quality hospital for the care you need? Many people simply choose the hospital that’s nearest to them, or rely on word-of-mouth from family and friends.

But not all hospitals are created equal. It can be hard to know which one will deliver the best care for your procedure or condition. That’s why Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania is introducing WebMD Hospital Advisor℠, an online hospital comparison application.

Members with BlueCare® coverage can use this web-based tool to compare up to 10 hospitals at a time according to these factors:
- Number of patients treated
- Mortality rates
- Complications
- Length of stay
- Costs

You can rank these criteria according to their relative importance to you. The application then provides a report ranking each hospital selected on its overall score, as well as individual factors. Using the information provided, you can discuss your options with your doctor and make the best choice for your situation together.

To learn more about Hospital Advisor, log in to the Member Self-Service area of www.bcnepa.com.