



P R I N C E E D W A R D  
FAMILY HEALTH TEAM  
*A team approach to your good health*

Don't let Asthma Control Your Life  
By Dee Hazel RN

Spring and summer can be glorious times of year! But, for those of us with seasonal allergies and asthma it can be a very miserable time. So why do people with asthma and allergies have such a rough time in spring and summer?

Spring and summer can be a difficult because many people who have allergies are allergic to pollen or grass. Not everyone who has asthma has allergies too, but many do. About  $\frac{3}{4}$  of people with asthma also have allergies. So what can you do? One of the best places to start if you or your child has asthma is to learn about it. The more you know the better you can manage our asthma and the healthier you can be.

What is asthma? Asthma is a chronic disease that affects the airways in the lungs. The “bronchioles” are the airways in the lungs that move the air from the outside to our lung tissue. With asthma, a couple of things happen. The muscles around the outside of the airways can be “twitchy” and this means that when we are exposed to things we are sensitive or allergic to, the muscles in our airways tighten up. When these muscles tighten, the airways are smaller and this makes it difficult to breath. Another thing that happens with asthma is there is swelling or “inflammation” inside our airways along with extra mucous production. This also makes it harder to breath.

How do you avoid the narrowing and swelling in our airways? Firstly you need to take your medications as directed by your health care provider. The second thing you need to do is to avoid those things that make your breathing worse. These can be things you are allergic to like hay, feathers and dust or things that make your breathing worse like smog, cold wind or scented cleaning products. Your asthma ‘triggers’ are those things that make your asthma worse. Each person may have different asthma triggers. So, to breath easier, try to figure out what your triggers are and avoid them. Your health care provider and asthma educator can help with this.

If you have been diagnosed with Asthma and your symptoms go away, it does not mean you don't have asthma anymore. When a person with asthma has no symptoms we call this controlled asthma. Your goal is to be symptom free and in control of your Asthma. You get control of your symptoms by taking your medication as prescribed and avoiding your triggers. There are times when you may have a flare up in your Asthma and you may need to take more medication or different medication. You also need to let your health care provider know when you do have symptoms because sometimes you may need to change the medication you are on. It is important to develop an Asthma Action Plan. This plan will help you figure out what you should do when Asthma symptoms start. If you don't have an action plan, talk to your health care provider about making an appointment with the PEFHT asthma educator and she can help you develop one.

If exercise brings on an asthma attack, don't avoid exercise. Talk to your health care provider or asthma educator about this. Exercise is really good for you and your asthma. What you need to do is take your reliever medication before you exercise so you can breathe easy and play!

For some people with asthma it seems that the asthma will never get better. They feel like they have to miss out on life and their favourite activities because they are always having an attack or just can't breathe right. It should not be this way. Asthma can be controlled. If you want help controlling your asthma just ask. Go to your doctor or NP and ask them to help you make an appointment with the asthma educator. Together we can make sure you are getting the best treatment for your asthma and that you are controlling it and it is not controlling you.