

Asthma plan helps parents, kids breathe free

As you load up the kids' backpacks with school supplies and prepare to send them back to school, make sure they are equipped with special medical instructions for their teachers and after-school caregivers, especially if they have asthma. Before the summer months fade into fall school days, Dr. Michael Cabana, a pediatrician in the Asthma Care Education program, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, at the University of Michigan Health System, encourages all parents who have children with asthma to create a special plan in the event the child has an asthma attack while they are at school or in the care of others. "Asthma is a very serious disease. Even kids with very mild asthma can have severe flare-ups," he says. "That's why it is so important for every family to have an Asthma Action Plan to ensure their child's medical

needs are met, especially when they are away."

Most of the 5 million children in the United States with chronic asthma lead normal, healthy lives. However, an asthma attack, which causes the muscles around the air tubes to tighten and restrict airflow in and out of the lungs, can happen at any time.

That's the main reason why Sarah Coates created an Asthma Action Plan for her son, Thivian, who has had asthma since he was an infant. The plan, she says, is not only helpful for others, but also serves as a reference guide for her when Thivian has an attack.

ACTION PLAN

"The Asthma Action Plan definitely puts my mind at ease," Coates says. "I know what to expect and what steps to take when an attack happens. It

Facts about asthma

- Asthma is one of the most common childhood diseases, affecting about 5 million children in the United States.
- Work with your child's health care provider to establish an individual Asthma Action Plan to leave with your child's caregivers: teachers, the babysitter, family and friends.
- Asthma Action Plans can help parents and their children better manage asthma on a daily basis.
- As your child grows, be sure to update his Asthma Action Plan to accommodate new medications or change contact information.

keeps me from calling the hospital at three o'clock in the morning trying to find a triage nurse."

The first step in creating an Asthma Action Plan is to consult with your child's health care provider. Cabana, who fre-

quently works with parents to create a plan, says it should outline symptoms of an upcoming attack, specific medications a child should be administered, and detail when and how the child should take those medications. It should also list who to

call or what to do if the medications are not working.

Asthma Action Plans are also useful on a day-to-day basis to help children manage their asthma and even prevent attacks.

"The Asthma Action Plan is like a road map," says Cabana. "It provides directions for not only what to do when asthma flares-up, but also what you and your child can do regularly to manage medications and avoid some common asthma triggers."

Asthma triggers vary from child to child, which is why they should be listed in the Asthma Action Plan. Some of the more common asthma triggers include dust, mites, mold, perfume, exercise, strong chemical smells and tobacco smoke. In addition, viral infections and influenza often bring on asthma attacks. Although it's difficult to pre-

vent a viral infection, Cabana recommends that children with asthma get flu shots each year and are up-to-date on other immunizations.

Also, each year the Asthma Action Plan should be updated before the start of school to accommodate the child's new daily schedule and modify any medication or emergency contact information.

And when revising or creating an Asthma Action Plan, Cabana encourages parents to include their child. It's important, he says, for the plan to list instructions that the child can easily follow, too, on a daily basis or in the event of an asthma attack.

"Whenever possible, kids should be involved in their own asthma management," Cabana says. "At the very least, they need to be able to recognize asthma symptoms when they occur."

MEDICAL DATEBOOK

ONGOING

Headache

Do you suffer from constant headaches? If so, join the Headache Foundation Support Group the first Wednesday of each month at Providence Northwestern Medical Center-Farmington Hills, 3005 Northwestern, Farmington Hills, Cal. (248) 258-1973.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Everyone is welcome to the AA meetings held at noon every Tuesday and Thursday at Providence Medical Office Center-Novi, 39500 W. 10 Mile Road (at Gagerly), Novi, Cal. (248) 348-9362. AA meetings also held noon every Wednesday at Mission Health Medical Center-Livonia, 37595 Seven Mile Road, Livonia, Cal. (734) 953-1188.

Thyroid cancer

Thyroid Cancer Survivors' Association, Inc. support group meets 7:30 a.m. the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Plymouth Public Library, 223 S. Main Street, downtown Plymouth, in the Gold Room. For more information about the ThyCa SE Michigan Support Group, call Mary Rose at (734) 397-7201 or e-mail: SE_Michthyca.org. For more information on thyroid cancer and our other free support services, visit www.thyca.org or call toll free (877) 588-7904.

Hernia Repair

Dr. Larry W. Shapiro, a general surgeon, will schedule free hernia screenings by calling (866) 437-6479. His offices are located in Farmington, Walled Lake and Garden City.

AUGUST

Loss of baby

"Parents Supporting Parents," a support group for parents coping with the loss of an infant through miscarriage, stillbirth or newborn death, meets 7 p.m. the third Monday of each month

at Providence Hospital-Southfield,

6001 W. Nine Mile, Southfield, West

Michigan, Cal. (248) 649-5342.

Baby care

Concerned about adapting to life with a baby? Sign up for "Baby Care Basics" offered 7 p.m. Monday, August 19, at Mission Health Medical Center-Livonia, 37595 Seven Mile Rd. (at Newburgh), Livonia, \$20 per couple. To register, call (877) 345-5500.

Dyslexia

The Michigan Dyslexia Institute will offer computer-training classes 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. August 20-22 at the Institute's Detroit Office Center, 30230 Orchard Lake Road, Suite 120, Farmington Hills. The first class is "Introduction to Microsoft Word." Fee: \$200. Call (248) 737-0044.

Muscle testing

Carlson Center Chiropractic Clinic will offer "Contact Reflex Analysis and Muscle Testing Workshop" 7:15 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 21, at 6231 N. Canton Center Road, Suite 109, Canton. No charge. Call (734) 455-6767.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Doctors Speakers Forum will offer a free Carpal Tunnel Syndrome workshop 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 7, at the Carl Sandburg Library, 30100 W. Seven Mile, Livonia. Call (800) 286-0556.

Post-Polio Syndrome

The Michigan Polio Network will host its 17th annual Post-Polio Syndrome Conference Aug. 23 and 24 at the Valley Plaza Inn, Midland, Mich. The conference is open to anyone who wants to learn more about Post-Polio Syndrome or any other late effects of having had polio. Polio survivors and their caregivers welcome. Cost is \$25 and includes continental breakfast and lunch on Saturday. Pre-registration is recommended. Call (313) 885-7655 or (616) 964-6184.

Alzheimer's walk

The Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk 2002 will take place Saturday, Aug. 24 at the Detroit Zoo, Royal Oak. Registration begins 7:30 a.m. with closing ceremony at 11 a.m. featuring J.J. from "J.J. and Lynn" (WCSX 947 FM). Call (248) 551-8277 or visit www.alzdel.org.

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Call (248) 551-8277 or visit

www.alzdel.org.

Fibromyalgia

Dr. Paul Masatski will offer a workshop on dealing with Fibromyalgia 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 27, at the Lowen Clinic, 22320 Farmington Road (two blocks south of Grand River), Farmington, Cal. (248) 474-4484.

Headaches

The Doctors Speakers Forum will offer a free "Headache Workshop" 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 29, at the Carl Sandburg Library, 30100 W. Seven Mile, Livonia. Call (800) 286-0556.

Hearing problems

Marshall Field's Hearing Care in the Westland Mall offers a free hearing test and consultation Aug. 29-31. For an appointment, call (734) 458-5570.

SEPTEMBER

9-11 blood drive

To commemorate 9-11, Beaumont Hospital will host a community blood drive 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 7, in the Administration Bldg., lower level - Classroom 1, 3601 W. Thirteen Mile, Royal Oak. Call (248) 551-0760 for an appointment.

Thyroid

The Michigan Thyroid Support Group will meet 6:30 p.m. Monday, Sept. 9, at the Plymouth Library, 223 S. Main Street, Plymouth. Dr. David Brownstein (<http://dabrownstein.com>) from The Center for Holistic Medicine in West Bloomfield, will be the guest speaker. He is the author of *Overcoming Thyroid Disorders, Overcoming Arthritis, and The Miracle of Natural Hormones*. Call Tracy Green at (734) 453-7945, e-mail mthyroid@comcast.net, or visit <http://mihometown.com/belthyroid>.

"Mother-to-Mother"

Breastfeeding Support Group at the Taylor Health Center, 26650 Eureka 1-3 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 20. The group will meet the third Wednesday of each month beginning in September at the center. All women and their partners are welcome to attend.

WIC is a supplemental nutrition program designed to improve the health of infants, children under 5 years-old, and pregnant and breast-feeding women. For more information about WIC, breast-feeding and World Breast-feeding Month activities, call Diane Moore at (734) 727-7105.

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DAD

FROM PAGE C6

"Mothers should try to breast-feed for at least a couple of weeks and seek support before they give up. Remedies are available for sore and cracked nipples," says Gremelin McNeal, a breastfeeding peer counselor for the WIC program. "Breast-feeding is a loving and wonderful experience. You are giving something that formula cannot give."

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