

Asthma Care

We know that going back-to-school can be a significant health issues for students with asthma. In fact, Dr. Ann-Marie Brooks, Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, Pediatric Pulmonologist shared the following in an article she wrote, “Asthma and Back to School: A Dangerous Combination.” Emergency room visits for asthma begins to climb in August and peak in September and October. There are many potential reasons for this peak: ragweed (and other weed allergens) counts, anxiety associated with going back to school, changes to routine and increased viral exposures. While many of those triggers cannot be controlled, Dr. Brooks suggests the following steps parents can take to protect their children during this time:

- See your physician and create an updated asthma action plan. The plan should outline how to recognize your child’s triggers, how to avoid triggers, and how to manage symptoms as soon as they occur. Ideally, this should be done before school starts, but late is better than never! If available, obtain lung function testing. Swelling and inflammation of the airways may show up on these tests before you or your child notice symptoms. Make sure you leave with multiple copies of the action plan – one for each caretaker, including teachers and coaches.
- Get refills for all medications. If your child also has food allergies, be sure to obtain a food action plan and an up-to-date epipen.
- Be sure to have a spacer device for both home and school; no matter how coordinated your child thinks he/she is, less than 10 percent of the medicine actually gets to the lungs without a spacer. Most insurance companies will approve a rescue medication for both home and school if your provider indicates as such on the prescription.
- Focus on taking (or restarting) your child’s daily control medication. Remember, this is the medication that is necessary to prevent an asthma exacerbation. The earlier you start, the more effective it will be during those times of stress.
- Make an appointment with your child’s school nurse/teacher/coach to review triggers, signs of distress and how your child typically responds to medication. Make sure your child has a medical healthcare plan at school. Georgia law allows all children to carry an albuterol inhaler with parent and physician permission. Together with the school nurse and school staff, determine where the inhaler will be stored.