



The Wheezing & Sneezing Times

Academy Allergy, Asthma & Sinus, P.C.



Reminders:

Don't forget to get the **Flu Shot this fall! Watch our website or call our office in October for details.*

Save the date for the **2008 Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN) annual walk. Indianapolis will walk for food allergies on **September 27th**. Check out FAAN's website www.foodallergy.org for details.*

Allergic to **stinging insects? This is the time of the year to be extra careful. Be sure to carry your epi-pen with you at **all times!***

****Daylight Savings Time** Don't forget to set your clock back 1 hour on **Sunday, November 2nd** at 2:00 a.m.*

Provide us with your **feedback. Click on the link at the bottom, right side of our website.*

The Flu Shot

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. Many people use the term "stomach flu" to describe illnesses with nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. These symptoms are not associated with the flu. Influenza produces symptoms such as fever, dry cough, sore throat, fatigue, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches.

A common misconception about the flu shot is that it can give you the flu. However, this is not true. The viruses that are used to make the flu vaccine are inactivated, meaning that they are not live viruses. Whereas, the flu is caused by live viruses. If you do get the flu after having a flu shot, it is because you were exposed to the flu virus prior to receiving the flu shot. This illness was not caused by the vaccine itself.

People who are allergic to eggs may be able to receive the flu shot despite popular belief. If you have an allergy to eggs and would like to have a flu shot, talk to your physician. There is a safe way to administer this vaccine despite your allergy. Our office can perform a test to see if you will react to the flu shot. First, we would administer a tenth of the vaccine to you and observe you for a reaction. If you do not have a reaction, we will then give you the rest of the vaccine. We will then observe you for 30 minutes after you have received the full vaccine. This method is very safe and effective. This procedure only needs to be done once. If no reaction is noted, you will be able to receive the full vaccine, without this testing, in subsequent years.

The flu shot is extremely important for people with diseases of the lungs, such as COPD and asthma. It is so important because influenza is a disease of the lungs, and can possibly lead to other life-threatening problems, such as pneumonia. Groups of people who are at high risk for severe illness need to make sure they receive a flu shot. These groups are children, age 6-59 months, pregnant women, people 50 years of age and older, and adults or children with a chronic health condition, including but not limited to asthma. The best time to get the flu shot is in the fall around October or November. However, you can still receive the flu vaccine in December and benefit from it. The flu season can start as early as October and last as late as May.

The most common side effect of the flu shot is soreness where the shot was given. This soreness may last 1-2 days. Rare side effects include fever, muscle pain and weakness.

Watch our website for this year's flu shot schedule and to stay updated on the state of Indiana's flu watch status.

Abbey Hendrixson, RN

(Information for this article was obtained from the following sources: CDC National Immunization Program's website; Myths and facts about the flu by Dorothy Borton from Nursing; Oct 1998).





Save Yourself Time and Money!

Know Your Insurance Benefits!



We're all very busy these days. However, it is important for you take time to read the information you receive from your insurance company. By educating yourself now, you may save time, frustration, and money later.

When you call to verify your benefits, this does not guarantee coverage. There are several reasons why a claim can be denied. The doctor may be in network, but some procedures or tests may not be included in the co-pay for the office visit. These procedures may apply to a deductible, which means you are responsible for payment until you meet your deductible. If you have new insurance, treatment for pre-existing conditions may be denied. In this case you would need to get a Certificate of Coverage (*See our Spring 2008 newsletter for more information on credible coverage.*) from your previous insurance to show you had coverage prior to changing to this new plan. There may also be a limit to the number of times a test can be done per year. These are just a few examples. If you are seeking care from a specialist or having any kind of test done, you should call your insurance company and check on any restrictions or procedures you must follow.

Here is some basic information you should know to prepare yourself for future healthcare needs.

- * Find out what your co-pay is for an office visit to both your primary care doctor and a specialist; they may vary.
Co-pay is a predetermined fee that you pay for services in addition to what the insurance company pays.
- *Ask if you have a deductible and what you would be responsible for after it has been met. Find out what types of services apply to the deductible. A deductible is a portion of the claims that you must pay out of pocket.
- *Find out if you need a referral to see a specialist.
- *If you're seeing a new doctor make sure they are in network!
- *Ask if there are specific hospitals or labs you must go to for testing.
- *If changing your insurance, be sure there is no lapse between one ending and the other starting. It could affect your coverage with the new insurance company.
- * Reply to all requests for information from your insurance company or they may deny future claims until you do so!

An informed patient is a happy patient!

Mary Hays, Front Office Assistant

Obesity and Asthma: The Link

There have been a number of reports suggesting a "link" between obesity and asthma. Both asthma and obesity are very common in the United States. Asthma affects some 20 million Americans while obesity affects 61 million. The question, though, is obesity causing asthma or is asthma the cause of obesity?

Most presume that asthma comes first because of the limited activity that sometimes follows asthma. This may lead to obesity. The myth that people with asthma should not exercise may be responsible for the obesity and asthma connection. With proper treatment, exercise can, in fact, improve your asthma.

Others believe that extra body weight makes it harder to breathe. The chest wall does not move as easily as it should with the excess weight causing the symptoms of wheezing and shortness of breath. Obesity can affect lung growth in children, resulting in smaller lungs.



This can cause permanent changes in airway function, causing the symptoms associated with asthma.

Asthma and obesity are serious chronic conditions. Reaching or maintaining a healthy weight is one way of lowering your odds for developing asthma.

If you suffer from both asthma and obesity, talk to your physician about starting an exercise program and weight reduction plan while maintaining control of your asthma. You can improve your quality of life!

Jennifer Mierau, RN, AE-C

Tracy Donahue, FNP
David Patterson, MD

