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Division of Disease Control

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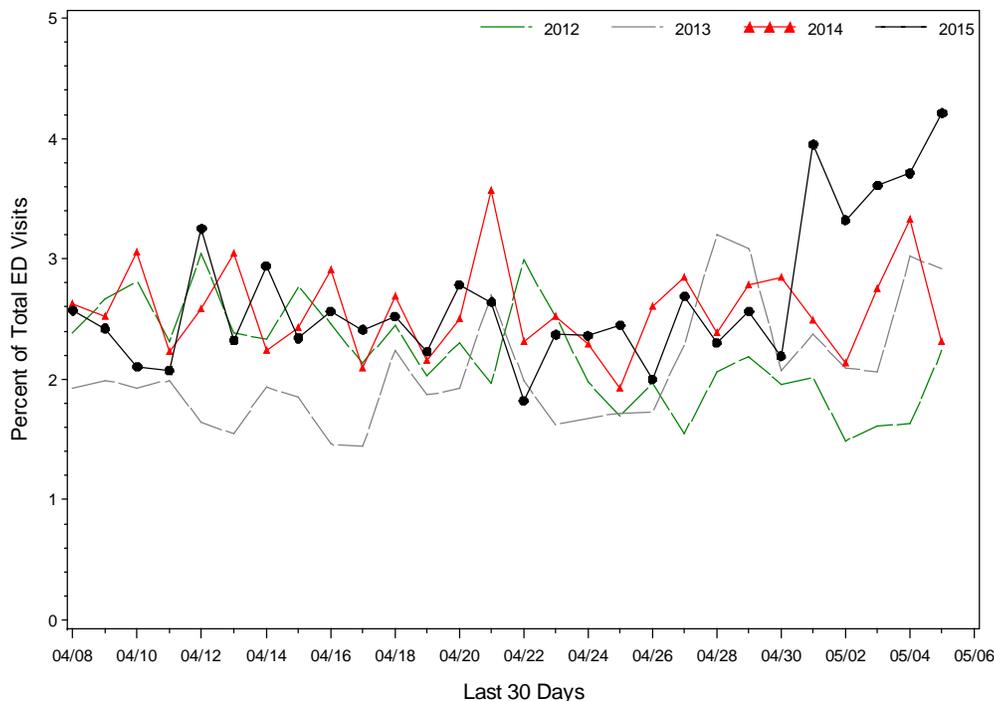
Health Advisory
Increase in Asthma-Related Emergency Department Visits
Associated with Rising Tree Pollen Concentrations
May 8, 2015

In conjunction with increased airborne concentrations of tree pollens, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) has concurrently detected greater-than-expected increases of asthma-related visits to emergency departments (ED) in the Philadelphia area over the last several days (figure). ED visits have been significantly higher than in recent past years at this time. PDPH would like to remind providers that rising tree pollen concentrations over the next couple of weeks will continue to exacerbate asthma and allergic rhinitis in sensitive patients. As a result, increased patient visit and call volume should be expected.

Providers are encouraged to:

- Periodically assess asthma control in patients. This includes a determination of whether adjustments to current therapy are needed, as well as reviews of medication technique and asthma action plans. Inhaled corticosteroids are one of the most effective treatments for persistent asthma.
- Educate patients about triggers and appropriate avoidance of those triggers. This should include the practice of monitoring pollen and outdoor air quality forecasts and limiting activities on days forecasted to be high. More specific recommendations include: keeping windows closed while pollen counts are high; avoiding early morning outings or being outside during windy conditions; changing clothes and showering after exposure to avoid trapping pollen and allergens indoors.
- Help parents of children attending schools within the School District of Philadelphia complete a medical administration form (MED-1). This is a required form which needs to be signed by the health care provider and by the parent so school nurses and staff can provide treatment to children. It should be noted that students are allowed to carry their own inhalers as long as they have submitted the required form and have been assessed and approved to do so by the school nurse.

Time-series of the asthma syndrome over last 30 days, by year



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