



Philadelphia Department of Public Health
Division of Disease Control

THOMAS A. FARLEY, MD, MPH
Health Commissioner

CAROLINE JOHNSON, MD
Deputy Health Commissioner

STEVEN ALLES, MD, MS
Director, Division of Disease Control

Health Advisory

Preparing Patients with Asthma and Allergies for Spring Pollen Season April 4, 2017

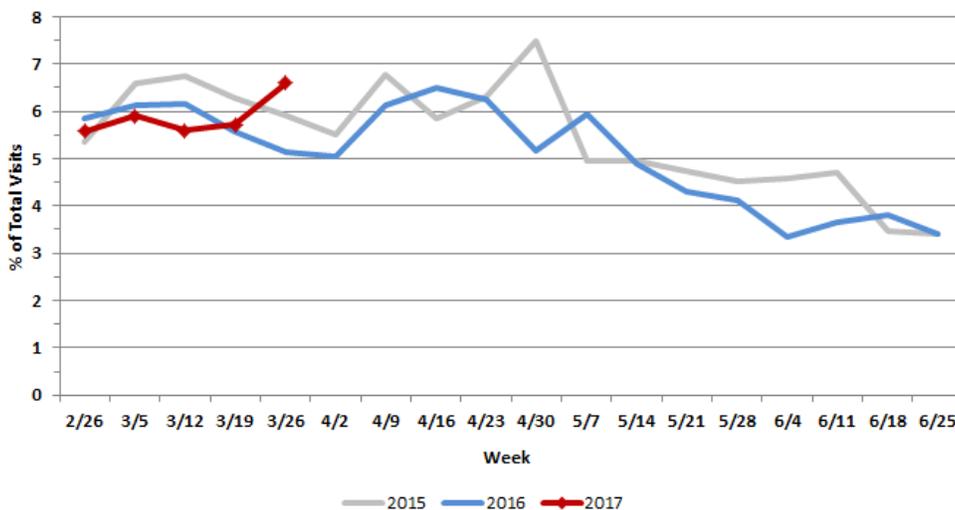
The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) would like to remind providers that rising tree pollen concentrations over the coming weeks will exacerbate asthma and allergic rhino-conjunctivitis in sensitive patients, resulting in an increased patient visit and call volume, as well as increases in asthma-related visits to emergency departments (ED). While the exact timeframe for spring pollen season may vary from year to year, historically we have seen increases of asthma-related ED visits occur between early-April to early-May (graph).

Providers are encouraged to help patients prepare for pollen season-related illness now by:

- Assessing patients' asthma and allergy control and making appropriate adjustments to prescribed medication regimens (including the use of inhaled corticosteroids for persistent asthma)
- Educating patients about avoiding asthma and allergy triggers, including:
 - Monitoring daily pollen counts, which can be checked online through:
 - The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology website: <http://pollen.aaaai.org/nab/index.cfm?p=allergenreport&stationid=92>
 - Pollen.com: <https://www.pollen.com/>
 - Limiting time outside when pollen counts are high (particularly early mornings or during windy conditions)
 - Changing clothes and showering after outside activities
 - Wearing sunglasses to protect eyes from pollen exposure
 - Keeping windows closed to avoid pollen-laden air from coming inside (air conditioners should be set on re-circulated rather than outside air)
- Helping parents of children attending school by completing an asthma action plan and a medicine administration form so that school nurses and staff can monitor, recognize and treat asthma symptoms. It should be noted that State law mandates that children who are capable to do so as determined by their parents, providers and school staff may carry their own inhalers during the school day.

Additional resources about asthma and environmental triggers, including printable checklists for caregivers and educational materials for children, are available from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): <https://www.epa.gov/asthma/resources-about-asthma>

**Weekly Asthma-related ED Visits (% of total ED visits) for Children
Ages 13 Years and Younger in Philadelphia, Feb.-June, 2015-2017**



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Philadelphia Department of Public Health

Division of Disease Control • 500 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19146
215-685-6740 (phone) • 215-686-4514 (after hours) • 215-238-6947 (fax) • www.phila.gov/health/DiseaseControl • hip.phila.gov