

Health Advisory

Preparing Patients with Asthma and Allergies for Spring Pollen Season

April 25, 2018

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 late-March to early-May (graph).

Providers are encouraged to help patients prepare for pollen season-related illness 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 (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 and filters should be checked for replacement)
- 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. If a child is able to use their inhaler on their own, providers should consider including a statement in the child's asthma action plan or providing a form letter for students to take to school that states they may carry their own inhaler during the school day and use it as necessary. A sample form can be found here: https://hip.phila.gov/Portals/default/HIP/DiseaseControlGuidance/DiseasesConditions/Asthma_Action_Plan.pdf

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 Pediatric* Emergency Department Visits, Philadelphia 2015-2018

* Children 13 years or younger

