

# Asthma Insider

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## It's School Time Again pg 3

**2** Clinic  
Corner

**5** Maintenance  
vs. Rescue  
Inhalers

**7** Proactive  
Parent

# CLINIC CORNER

## The eAsthma Tracker Keeps us Involved

We have found the eAsthma Tracker (eAT) to be very useful in our practice.

Using the tracker helps patients become more aware of their specific asthma symptoms and triggers.

The eAT is also a nice way for us to keep track of patients' asthma, as it notifies us and allows us to call patients who might be getting into trouble to discuss their asthma management.

We feel that by using the eAT we are more actively involved in our patients' asthma care. The eAT is a very helpful tool.



*Mark T. Witt, MD*

### Interested in more testimonials?

Dr. Johnson (Pediatrician)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9cO1f8ZWVg>

Dr. Fassel (Pediatrician)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szEB1nk1-UM>

Michelle Frazier (Parent)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cO29BRDV4bA>

Amy Teleford (Parent)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dsw4vP-EL-l>

## FACEBOOK PAGE

Do you have questions about the eAsthma Tracker? Or asthma in general?

Get the most out of the tips, facts, and information provided by interacting with other followers of the page. Leave your comments, questions, and stories so we can learn from one another.

Get involved and let's control asthma together!

To join, go to Facebook and type in E-Asthma Tracker User Group in your search box or click on the link below.

<https://www.facebook.com/easthmatracker>

*by Stacey Riding*

# THE ABCs OF THE FLU

People with asthma are at a higher risk for severe diseases and flu complications. It's the season to really pay attention to monitoring and utilizing the eAsthma tracker, because attacks happen easily this time of year.

The flu, or influenza medically speaking, is linked to 200,000 hospitalizations each year in the United States alone, and a majority are asthma sufferers because of their already weak immune systems.

There are three types of the flu virus: A, B, and C or as I like to call it, "Asthmatics Be Cautious." Types A and B are the main types of the flu that cause at least 20 percent of the population to feel symptoms that include chills, fever, body aches, sore throats, coughing, wheezing and constant fatigue. Type C is less severe but it is the only type immune to the flu shot.

**Type A:** This type of flu is constantly changing and is mostly responsible for the large flu epidemics. The Type A flu virus is commonly passed by infected people to others.

Common hot spots include surfaces that are commonly touched or rooms where sneezing has been an issue for an infected child or person, like a classroom.

**Type B:** This type of flu is only found in humans and that is why it can have less severe reactions than its predecessor but can still be very dangerous for asthmatics.

**The cold season is among us, and it could very well be dubbed an asthmatic's worst enemy**

**Type C:** This type of flu is the lesser of the three evils and is only found in humans. It is said that this type of flu is so minor that a person may not even develop symptoms during the duration of the infection, but it can affect asthmatics differently.

There are steps that can be taken to alleviate the risk of the flu virus or shorten its duration. Aside from the obvious of locking yourself in the house and wiping everything down, which isn't possible all of the time, getting the flu shot is the first step. Also drinking a lot of liquids with steam, including hot tea and chicken soup, can help break up the mucus. Zinc and Vitamin C incorporated into the diet can also help fight the viruses, as can antiviral drugs—such as Tamiflu.

Signs that seem minor, from a sneeze or wheeze, must be dealt with immediately. Monitor the color zones,

take medication on schedule, and watch for all the signs.

We all have stories to share, questions to ask, and advice to give. Visit the eAsthma tracker page on Facebook, like it, comment, and leave a tip or story. Let's learn from each other's experiences. And let's keep track before the attack!

*by Stacey Riding*

## IT'S SCHOOL TIME AGAIN:

### Take Notes— and a Deep Breath

As we bid our children farewell and watch them go off into the real world, parental worry looms over us, knowing they are no longer under our watchful eye. It seems like yesterday we were changing diapers and administering medicine, and now they are off to school! Yikes! Children with asthma can make us sorry even more, but with a little planning, it doesn't have to be that way.

Whether it's bad weather, pollen in the air, chalk dust, or gym class, flare-ups are everywhere. But there is no reason we can't keep our kids safe while they are away. What can we do, you ask?

*... continued on page 6*

# NASAL SPRAYS

## Are they safe for asthmatics?

When it isn't controlled, asthma can be very limiting. Even the simplest things can aggravate asthma. But what about things designed to improve our health conditions, like medicine? I came across this question: "Is nasal spray safe for asthmatics?"

The answer, like the topic, is complicated. No one knows for sure. Using a nasal spray has not been shown to have dire effects on people with asthma, but every medication comes with side effects.

Antihistamine nasal spray can react to other medication. Corticosteroid nasal spray can irritate the nasal cavity and affect the respiratory system if used too frequently.

Nasonex and other types of nasal decongestants have been known to cause chest pains, tightness in the chest, shortness of breath, trouble breathing, and/or wheezing and coughing.

Another potential side effect when of using a nasal sprays is sneezing, which can accelerate the heart rate and get the respiratory system worked up.

These symptoms alone can aggravate an asthmatic. Thankfully, these side effects are rare if the medication is used as directed.

Decongestants, whether they come in the form of a liquid, a mist, or a pill, are designed to relieve symptoms—but for people with asthma, their side effects can be magnified, especially for those currently taking asthma medication. It's all about what's in the decongestant. They're all stimulants, but the most common ones contain pseudoephedrine and/or mucolytic agents that help dissolve mucus in the airways; however, they may also irritate the airways.

It's helpful to note that using a nasal spray as opposed to a pill for any congestion has a

less chance of adverse effects because the mist doesn't come in direct contact with the blood system.

Nasal inhaler spray is effective, but like all medication, proper usage is important, and you should always consult your doctor before taking medicine you are new to or unsure of.

Using a nasal spray device is typically safe for anyone, as long as it's not abused. But like I said, knowledge is power, so consulting with a physician is the smartest thing to do.

*by Stacey Riding*

## PROACTIVE PARENT

When you have a child with asthma, it's important to know your resources and your rights. Here in the state of Utah, the Department of Health has a program to help parents do just that. The Utah Asthma Program (UAP) was founded in 2001 to help improve the lives in those with asthma and has since received grants and recognition for their work, enabling them continue their mission toward improving school- and home-based services as well as the delivery and quality of clinical services. Their website is a great resource for parents who would like to learn more about what this state program is doing to help Utahns with asthma, from expanding. Visit [health.utah.gov/asthma](http://health.utah.gov/asthma) to learn more, and follow the Utah Asthma Program on Facebook for tips, health information, local asthma updates, and more.

*... continued on page 7*

# MAINTENANCE VS. RESCUE INHALERS:

## What's the Difference?

When your child is diagnosed with asthma, all of the new information can be overwhelming. But it's important to learn the difference between types of inhalers so you can make sure he or she is getting the right medicine at the right time.

## Maintenance Inhalers

A maintenance inhaler contains a long-acting asthma medicine that is used to control asthma, which is why it's often referred to as a controller. Your child should use this inhaler daily to reduce inflammation (swelling) in the lungs and prevent flare-ups. The doctor will tell you how many times per day to use this inhaler. Don't forget any doses—this medicine can take days or weeks to start working.

## Rescue Inhalers

As the name implies, this inhaler is used to "rescue" your child when he or she is having trouble breathing. It is a fast-acting medicine used to treat sudden symptoms. Rescue inhalers open up your child's airways so he or she can breathe. These are also called quick-acting or quick-relief inhalers.

Don't forget to take your child's

Type of Inhaler	What it Does	Examples
Maintenance (long-acting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevents flare-ups</li> <li>Takes longer to work</li> <li>Reduces inflammation</li> <li>Improves asthma control</li> </ul>	FLovent® (fluticasone) QVAR® (beclomethasone dipropionate HFA) Pulmicort® (budesonide)
Rescue (fast-acting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Treats sudden symptoms</li> <li>Works quickly</li> <li>Opens airways</li> </ul>	Proventil®, Ventolin® (albuterol) Metaproterenol® (Alupejt) Xopenex® (Levalbuterol) Mazair® (pibuterol)

rescue inhaler wherever you go—you never know when you'll need it.

Follow the instructions from your doctor for using this inhaler. He or she will tell you how many times your child can use it and when to seek medical help.

By Jordan Gaddis

## References

1. Hatfield, Heather. "Asthma: The Rescue Inhaler—Now a Cornerstone of Asthma Treatment." Web MD. 2 Jun 2014. <<http://www.webmd.com/asthma/features/asthma-rescue-inhaler-cornerstone-asthma-treatment>>
2. "Don't Confuse 'Rescue' and 'Maintenance' Inhalers." Institute for Safe Medicine Practices (ISMP) Safe Medicine. 2 Jun. 2014. <<http://www.ismp.org/newsletters/consumer/Issues/20100111.asp>>
3. "What's the Difference Between Rescue and Controller Medications?" Azma.com. 2 Jun 2014. <<http://www.azma.com/Asthma-Article.aspx?type=parents&aid=49#>>

# ITS SCHOOL TIME AGAIN:

Continued . . .

there are forms that can and need to be filled out for children who suffer from asthma? These forms can be found on the Utah Asthma Program website, [health.utah.gov](http://health.utah.gov). They must be obtained and updated at the beginning of each school year. The purpose of these forms is to make the school aware your child suffers from asthma. They also give staff permission to administer medication in case your child has a flare-up at school. It's a good idea to speak with the teachers, gym coaches, and counselors about your asthma plan, so they know what to do in case of an emergency.

Schools can also view the Action Asthma Plan form at [health.utah.gov/asthma/pdfs/](http://health.utah.gov/asthma/pdfs/), which needs to be completed and signed by the child's doctor—this explains how to treat your child. A separate form must be completed if your child is mature enough to self-administer the medication. If a teacher doubts your child's asthma or willingness to participate in extra activities—such as running or exercising in

Did you know

gym class—these files can be easily accessed by the teachers as proof that your child suffers from asthma and isn't making excuses not to participate.

Did you know that all schools are drug-free zones? Contrary to popular belief, medicines such as inhalers are considered drugs and can have an adverse affect on a person if taken

not made aware that your child has asthma. It comes down to communication, education, and responsibility to keep our children safe.

There is also a 504 plan aimed at preventing discrimination of children with asthma. This form can be used if your child happens to miss school days due to more severe symptoms.

It can be found on to 504 Plan website. For more information, visit [understood.org](http://understood.org).

By filling out these forms, you are giving yourself peace of mind while at the same time ensuring that your child will be okay at school. As parents, it's our job to take care of our children; these forms become our insurance that they will be well taken care of at school. So whether it's pills, inhalers, or an Epinephrine auto

injector, let's make the school staff aware so our kids can receive the proper care they deserve.

It's never inconvenient, or too much trouble to make sure our kids are well prepared. A lesson learned is knowledge earned!

by Stacey Riding

**Here's a helpful way to remember how you can prepare your child for the unexpected this school year:**

**A**-Ask the school nurse about an Asthma Action Plan form or print one out.

**S**-Supply the proper medications to the school so they can be administered.

**T**-Talk to teachers, counselors, and gym coaches about your child's condition.

**H**-Have the appropriate forms filled out by your child's doctor and given to the school.

**M**-Make sure teachers and staff know what to do in case of an attack or flare-up.

**A**-Attain proper forms if your child can administer his own asthma medication.

incorrectly. Inhalers may also be confiscated by the school officials if proof is not in the files that your child has asthma or permission to carry it. These forms are very important because schools can be held liable if they try to "play doctor" without legal documentation. The law would be on their side if these forms were not filled out or they were

# PROACTIVE PARENT

Continued . . .

If your child is school-aged, you may worry about how his or her asthma when you can't be there. School nurses are busy and can't always be at every school, so it's important for teachers and students to know how to handle an asthma attack or to simply understand what asthma is like for their students and peers.

**Here are five UAP programs, funded by the state of Utah, that you'll want to be aware of:**

## The Asthma School Resource Manual Training

The state will send educators to train school staff in a 20-minute presentation about "What to Do If A Student Has an Asthma Attack." Since most school nurses work between five to nine schools, this program trains staff to respond when the school nurse is at another school.

[Website: health.utah.gov/asthma/schools](http://health.utah.gov/asthma/schools)

## Winning with Asthma

(the Coach's clipboard)

This 20-minute online training is for recognizing the signs and symptoms of an athlete having an asthma attack. It shows how to treat the athlete and explains when to call 911.

[Website: health.utah.gov/asthma/schools/wwa](http://health.utah.gov/asthma/schools/wwa)

## Recess Guidance Program

Your school can register for a list serve that will notify when sensitive students should be kept in from recess due to air quality (such as kids with lung or heart problems).

[Website: health.utah.gov/asthma/airquality/recess](http://health.utah.gov/asthma/airquality/recess)

## School Flag Program

This national program was developed as a public education tool to parents and neighbors know about air quality. It encourages people to not idle while waiting to pick kids up from school, as well as carpooling, using mass transit, and trip chaining (running all of your errands in one day while the engine is still warm, thus reducing emissions).

[Website: health.utah.gov/asthma/airquality/recess](http://health.utah.gov/asthma/airquality/recess)

## Open Airways

The UAP partners with the American Lung Association to teach Open Airways classes in schools for students with asthma. This FREE six-week program, which is held once a week for 40 minutes, helps students better manage their asthma and has been shown to reduce missed school days. Students receive a free T-shirt and spacer during the class, and they enjoy a pizza party on the last day.

[Website: lung.org/associations/states/utah/asthma/open-airways-for-schools](http://lung.org/associations/states/utah/asthma/open-airways-for-schools)

*By Jordan Gaddis*