

April 2019

Asthma Link

Newsletter of Asthma Waikato | Te Ha Ora Huango

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From the Manager

It's been a long hot summer! Just before Christmas last year, we moved into our new premises at 18 Claudelands Rd (see image above). It's a great spot on a busy corner and with a big clinic room we can accommodate more whānau during a consult ensuring the education reaches further. We also have a meeting room meaning we can hold our extremely popular spirometry course on site now.



We have been seeing an increase in referrals following the change in season and unfortunately a lot of these referrals are because families have stopped the preventer during the summer, thinking there was no need for it any longer. Please don't stop the preventer without medical advice. Come and see us and we can help you understand the 'why' of this in more detail.

World Asthma Day May 7th



World Asthma Day is May 7th – a day to stop and think about those who have to think about their breathing. 1 in 7 kids have asthma in NZ and 586,000 school days are lost to asthma every year. Join with us to help make a difference! We will be distributing stickers to pharmacies and cafes again this year to help spread the word. If you'd like to help with this, please do let us know.

Sheryl Long, Operational Manager

News, views
and home truths to
encourage and inform people
with breathing difficulties

Common Concerns and Questions About Asthma (cont'd)



Following on from our series of concerns in December's AsthmaLink, here's some more of the questions we often get asked.

Concern #1: "Will the steroids in my child's inhaler stunt their growth?"

For children, minor growth suppression can occur during the first year of taking the inhaled corticosteroid. However, children that are using an inhaled corticosteroid will go through a "catch up" phase with their growth and height, and as they become beautiful and charming young adults their height will be the same as if they had never taken an inhaled corticosteroid.

(Source: Asthma and Respiratory Foundation NZ)

Concern #2: "The doctor has prescribed Redipred for my child - should I be concerned?"

Redipred is an oral steroid used in severe episodes of asthma. It works slowly over several hours to reverse the swelling of the airways. Redipred needs to be continued for several days after the asthma symptoms settle to make sure that the swelling doesn't return.

A short course of Redipred is safe with no lasting side effects. However, if your child needs Redipred MORE THAN TWICE A YEAR, your child's asthma is not under control. This is a concern and you need to get a review - talk to us or see your doctor.

Redipred more than twice a year can lead to unwelcome side effects - you can read more about it all here, (where they talk about Prednisone, this is the same as Redipred):

<https://www.asthmafoundation.org.nz/your-health/living-with-asthma/asthma-medication>



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SPIROMETRY COURSE

29TH & 30TH AUG 2019
9AM-4PM

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www.asthmawaikato.org.nz

"Thanks heaps for a very informative session. Was so great to get such a wide range of information to help us with Mackenzie's asthma and have such a good length of time to go through things thoroughly (often so rushed during doctor's visits). Thanks heaps, I feel much better informed and prepared to continue with MacKenzie's asthma journey!"

Mother of MacKenzie

Focus on Spirometry

What is spirometry?

The following information is largely taken from advice given by the American Academy of Asthma, Allergy and Immunology, coupled with information from The Asthma & Respiratory Foundation NZ.

Spirometry is a simple breathing test. It measures how much air flows in and out of your lungs. If you have symptoms that could be a sign of asthma—like shortness of breath—you should have a spirometry test.

Nobody wants to be taking medications for something they don't actually have, or worse still, giving their child medications for something they may not actually have. And we don't want to be walking around with symptoms that have not been diagnosed or managed correctly either.

The American Academy of Asthma, Allergy and Immunology states that asthma should not be diagnosed or managed without spirometry. Often the diagnosis and management of asthma is based solely on symptoms but these can be misleading and may have an alternative cause. Spirometry is therefore essential to confirm the diagnosis in those patients who can perform the procedure.

How is the test done?

Spirometry is a manoeuvre that is performed forcefully and rapidly. It requires the patient to be able to coordinate instructions in a timely manner, be fit enough to sit up straight and have energy for the hard and fast breathing test. This should not be mistaken for incentive spirometry or breathalyser test that are done slowly. The patient has a nose clip on, then takes a big breath in through the mouthpiece, and then instantly, forcefully 'blasts' the air out and keeps breathing out until he or she cannot or should not breathe any further, then takes a rapid deep breath in at the end. The resultant is displayed as a flow-volume loop and a volume time graph on the attached computer.

What will it cost?

Prices for spirometry can range greatly, and so can the quality of your test. You need to make sure that the person doing your test is properly trained and knows what they are doing. A spirometry test with Asthma Waikato currently costs \$65, but it is well worth having. If the test shows that you do not have asthma, this can save you hundreds of dollars in repeat prescription charges, doctor's fees and prescription fees. If you do not have the test and you have asthma, a hospital trip for an asthma attack can cost a huge amount of money in lost wages, time but more importantly, may result in death – something you can't put a price tag on.

Ask your doctor about a referral for a spirometry test today. Asthma Waikato can do this test for you (your doctor can refer you online through our website) and we also provide training to Health Professionals across the country in regards to correctly performing and interpreting the test in line with the most current guidelines.



Why have the test done?

Asthma or COPD can often have similar symptoms to other respiratory illnesses. A spirometry test can help confirm whether you have asthma or another cause of breathing difficulties. This is particularly important in people who have 'difficult to control asthma', which sometimes is not asthma at all. And it helps your healthcare provider decide on your treatment. A spirometry test can also show how well your treatment is working. If follow-up spirometry tests show that your asthma is well controlled, your treatment is working. If it shows that your asthma is not under control, your doctor may need to change your medicine or give you more or different treatment. You may have been on asthma medications since you were very small but never been formally diagnosed with asthma. A spirometry test can give a true diagnosis, which may show encouraging results meaning you may not need to be on the meds you are on.

Who should have the test?

Children older than age six, and adults of any age, who have asthma-like symptoms should have a spirometry test. Children under the age of 12 need to have the test done by a paediatric-trained technician. The healthcare provider should also do a physical exam and a full medical history. If the test shows that you have asthma, your doctor should prescribe asthma medicine. Then you should be retested four to six weeks later. If your test results improve, your treatment is working. You may even be able to take less medicine. If your symptoms get worse, you should have another spirometry test. Even if your symptoms are under control, you should have a test at least once every year or two.

The GINA (Global Initiative for Asthma) 2018 Guidelines states:

"Once the diagnosis of asthma has been made, lung function is the most useful indicator of future risk. It should be recorded at diagnosis, 3-6 months after starting treatment, & then periodically thereafter."

The American Academy of Asthma, Allergy and Immunology states: "Don't diagnose or manage asthma with spirometry."

In regards to COPD The Asthma & Respiratory Foundation of NZ states: "Spirometry (measuring the lung capacity) is the most important test to diagnose and monitor COPD."



Big Thankyou to Apex Medical

In our new premises we are excited to have a room where we can hold meetings and run our very popular Spirometry Training Course. We would like to say a huge thanks to Apex Medical who have helped us furnish this room and get it looking great. Our spirometry training course runs over two days and is so popular it fills up months in advance. It is essential that all people performing spirometry are properly trained to ensure the test is performed and interpreted properly. More information about our course can be found on our website. This room is also available for hire for meetings etc. Please enquire if interested.



Welcome Jessica Middleton – Latest Board Member

We farewelled Tam from the Asthma Waikato Board a few months ago – we wish her all the very best and thank her for her time given to further our work. We welcome Jessica Middleton! Jessica is a Senior Solicitor in the Commercial Law team at McCaw Lewis Lawyers. She also has significant experience with private and charitable trusts, as well as not-for-profit organisations and incorporated societies. She is keen to make a difference in her local community and we are very excited to have her on the team.



Become a member of Asthma Waikato

Asthma and Respiratory Services (Waikato) Inc trades as Asthma Waikato. We are an Incorporated Society and encourage people to become a member of our Society to show your support for the work that we do and help us to support you and your family better. MEMBERSHIP IS FREE! You can become a member today by filling in a very simple form on our website.

Thank you to our all our supporters and sponsors

Without the generous support of these organisations throughout 2018, Asthma Waikato would not be able to function. We are so grateful! Thank you!

plus...

The Warehouse, Gallaghers Charitable Trust, Hillcrest Pharmacy, Columbus, FastLane Café, Tui Medical Centre Te Rapa, Pharmacy 547, Unichem Rototuna, Beerescourt Life Pharmacy, Punnet, Steve Outram, Lochiel Golf Course, Unichem Pharmacy Cambridge, Duke Street Medical Centre Cambridge, Cambridge Medical Centre

Kiwis of all ages are dying from asthma each year!
You can help save their lives by supporting us to educate and prevent this happening...



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