



December 2018

Asthma Link

Newsletter of Asthma Waikato | Te Ha Ora Huango



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From the Manager

It's nearly the end of the year and there are exciting times ahead. We are moving into a larger stand-alone premises this month, located at 18 Claudelands Road, Hamilton. We will have a number of rooms there and a bigger clinic consult room to see our families. There will be more information about this in the next edition of AsthmaLink.

Check it Out



We have also been continuing to provide asthma education in a number of schools, community settings and in our clinic. Unfortunately we are still seeing concerning things in regards to poor technique, misunderstandings – especially around use of the preventer, and encountering a few myths that need debunking. We've addressed a few of the questions we hear in clinic in this edition and will continue on with these in subsequent issues.



Have a wonderful Christmas and New Years. Make sure your Action Plan is up to date, that you have had your 6 monthly review at the GP surgery and that you have enough current, unexpired medicines and spacers to get you through the holiday season.

Happy holidays!

Sheryl Long,
Operational Manager



Common concerns and questions about asthma



We often hear the same concerns / questions / statements asked over and over so earlier in the year we addressed some of these through our Facebook posts. Here's some of the things we looked at:

Concern #1: "No one else in the family has asthma so my child can't have it."

Environmental and genetic factors play a large part in asthma but the exact cause of asthma is unknown. Lots of different factors can contribute to the development of asthma for example allergies specific to your child or environmental exposures and so on.

Concern #2: "Three of my children have asthma so we just keep all medicines and spacers in a drawer and share them."

It is very hard to keep track of what asthma medication your child has had or needed if you keep all the medicines together and share. It also presents the wrong information to the doctor about the level of asthma control for each child as often they keep an eye on how well things are going by how many scripts are ordered and for whom. Each child has been prescribed what they personally need, and often although it may look similar to another medicine, the dose may be different and what may be safe for one child may be unsafe for another.



The danger is not knowing what your child has needed or not taken which can be very harmful to your child's health. Not to mention the sharing of bugs and germs throughout the family too by sharing spacers and inhalers!

An idea would be to have separate asthma bags for each child, so you can monitor what they are using - the medicines don't get mixed up and they are taking the correct medicine and correct dosage of their medicine. If you have had a consult with us in the past or would like to book in for one, we can give you an asthma bag for this purpose as well as our preventer reminder cards that are also really helpful (see back page).

Concern #3: "We don't use the preventer every day, just when he/she gets a cold."

Asthma is a chronic respiratory condition, which presents in the airways all the time whether you have asthma symptoms or not. In asthma even if you have no symptoms the airways can still react to triggers. The goal of the preventer is to prevent the reaction caused by your triggers. Using the preventer twice daily as prescribed ensures that the airways are already open and clear. Therefore, if you were to suddenly encounter a trigger that causes asthma symptoms, the reliever is more likely to work faster and be more effective. Preventers are also slow-acting medicines that takes time to work therefore must be used every day, whether well or not. [Preventers are of no use as an emergency medicine at all.](#)

Concern #6: "Will my child grow out of his/her asthma?"

Currently, there is no cure for asthma, however there are many things you can do to manage this, so it does not impact on your life. A child's asthma can get worse or better but for most people asthma is present for the rest of their lives. You cannot outgrow asthma but for some children, asthma may get better as their lungs grow.

Yehudit, Respiratory Nurse Educator



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www.asthmawaikato.org.nz

Why too much reliever medicine is not a good thing – and what constitutes too much?



A number of reliever medicine options.

X2 per week?

We know the word 'steroid' doesn't sit well with a lot of people, and therefore the thought of giving your child an inhaled corticosteroid (preventer medicine) often causes concern. But did you know it is safer to be on a low dose preventer than to be giving your child excessive reliever medicine? Inhaled steroids in correct dose are safe. So what constitutes excessive?

Reliever inhalers bring short-term relief from asthma by relaxing the smooth muscle bands around the airways. Your reliever is a life-saving medicine when having an asthma attack. You only take your reliever when you NEED it. There can be side effects such as shaking, fast heart rate and restlessness, but in an emergency situation, you will not overdose a person by giving them their reliever every few minutes.

The Asthma and Respiratory Foundation of NZ best practice guidelines for asthma management states that if the reliever medicine is being used more than twice a week, this is a strong indicator that asthma is uncontrolled. In many cases (not all) a preventer may be required. If your child is needing the reliever medicine (usually the blue puffer) more than 2x week (this means once on a Monday, and once on a Wednesday for example) - they definitely need a review. We hear stories every day of kids needing the reliever multiple times a day for long periods of time. Or using it before the preventer to 'open the airways'. THIS IS NOT SAFE. Please see your doctor or talk to us. Too much reliever use can create a paradox of making the asthma worse. It can also mean the body becomes less responsive to it meaning it isn't going to be of much help in an emergency.

What about exercise-induced asthma? Or needing the reliever prior to exercise? Frequent exercise-induced asthma is still a marker of poor asthma control. If someone is needing a lot of pre-exercise reliever, they may be better off on a preventer - please discuss this with your doctor.

Bottom-line: Use your reliever for rapid and immediate treatment of your asthma when it is required. It is a life-saving and very important medicine. But if you are needing it more than twice a week - see your doctor for a review. If you have further concerns about side effects from the reliever, please see your GP and discuss your concerns with your doctor.

Skipper's Story



"This is the story of my now 3 year old daughter Skipper, and our journey so far with asthma.

From very early on my daughter was constantly coughing and bringing up phlegm. She seemed to always be sick and until she turned 3 years old we all had many restless nights full of tears, frustration and confusion. I couldn't count the number of visits to the doctor we had that ended up with antibiotics for a viral cough, or suggestions that never really did fit any of Skipper's symptoms.

What I can count is the number of times that someone sat down with Skipper and I and asked questions, listened, explained and recommended where to next. ONE. Making contact with Asthma Waikato was something that has completely changed the way that Skipper experiences day to

day life. Not only did we receive amazing support and medication knowledge, but we now actually understand asthma and how it affects it Skipper, having been taught this through images, text and dialogue so that not only I, as Skipper's mother, could understand, but also in a way that involved my child. Skipper's asthma is now so well controlled that we experience none of the symptoms that Skipper used to face on a daily basis.

The best thing is that I know I can pick up the phone the moment I have any queries and I will be completely supported by this organisation. I will forever be grateful for the empowerment that Asthma Waikato has given me through sharing their knowledge."

Jaimee Laban, Skipper's mother



A defibrillator for Asthma Waikato!

Thanks to a very generous grant from Braemar Charitable Trust we now have a defibrillator on site to keep all visitors to our clinic safe. Thank you so much Braemar Charitable Trust!

New Preventer Reminder Cards

A new initiative at Asthma Waikato - Preventer Reminder Cards, with a wipeable surface and magnet back. We know how hard it is for kids to remember their preventer medicine. The idea is kids have their medicine, tick the morning box with a whiteboard pen, show Mum and Dad. Then they take it again at night and tick the evening box, then check in with Mum and Dad to show they've had it. Maybe a rewards system is established (eg. star chart) every time the card is presented with both boxes ticked. Then they can wipe it clear and start again. Our hope is that by using this system a solid routine will be established to ensure the preventer is always taken twice a day.

Many thanks to Waikato WDFK Karamu Trust for funding this project.



Welcome Hamish McCay - Latest Board Member

We farewellled Grant and Stanley from the Asthma Waikato Board in September. We thank them for their time and contribution to Asthma Waikato and wish them well. We welcome though Dr Hamish McCay who is a paediatrician with a special interest in respiratory conditions in children. He brings a medical expertise and previous governance experience to the Board and looks forward to helping empower people to be in charge of their asthma.

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, Beerscourt Life Pharmacy, Punnet, Steve Outram, Lochiel Golf Course, Unichem Pharmacy Cambridge, Duke Street Medical Centre Cambridge, Cambridge Medical Centre

Closure Dates!

Christmas 2018

We will close on
Thursday December 20th
and will reopen on **Monday**
January 14th 2019.

Asthma
Waikato

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