

Access to asthma meds, plus flu vaccines, keep kids with asthma healthy

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Kids need flu shots to prevent asthma flares, and medications available in school to keep 86 percent in class, according to two studies being presented at the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) Annual Scientific Meeting.

The first study looked at outcomes for kids with [asthma](#) following passage of a bill in Missouri which provides schools with equipment and access to medications to treat asthma. It also allows trained school employees to administer bronchodilator treatments to students when needed.

"Schools that implemented the RESCUE program (Resources for Every School Confronting Unexpected Emergencies) had great success in being able to send kids back to class," says allergist Manoj Warriar, MD, ACAAI member and study lead author. "Getting kids back to class rather than sending them home or to the emergency department creates improved health for our students and better academic performances, a win-win."

In the 2013-2014 school year, 90 schools used the equipment 1,357 times. That resulted in 86 percent of students going back to class, 11 percent going home and 1 percent being sent to the ED. In the 2014-2015 school year, 124 schools participated, with use of the equipment increasing, and similar percentages of kids going back to class. Participating schools were supplied with nebulizers, chambers, additional supplies, and access to free albuterol. When RESCUE supplies were used, school nurses logged the outcomes. The RESCUE program was developed by the St. Louis chapter of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America.

A second study found children with asthma were vaccinated for the flu at a higher rate than children without asthma. The study also found overall, [vaccination rates](#) are low, and have remained

stagnant for the past five years. Researchers reviewed the electronic medical records of children 2-18 years of age seen in a pediatric hospital between 2010-2014.

"During the 2014-2015 season, influenza vaccination rates were significantly higher for children with asthma (54 percent) compared to children without (44 percent), but were still below goal," said allergy fellow-in-training Deepa Patadia, MD, ACAAI member and lead author of the study. "It's important for kids with asthma to get an annual flu vaccine due to increased risk for complications with a serious infection like the flu. We still have room for improvement in getting [kids](#) vaccinated against the flu."

The study also showed that for children with asthma, vaccination rates were lower for children older than 13 years of age and those who were African American. Vaccination rates were higher for [children](#) receiving Medicaid and those of Latino and Asian ethnicity. There were no differences observed by gender.

According to ACAAI, unlike other viral respiratory infections, such as the common cold, the flu can cause severe illness and life-threatening complications for those with asthma, and every year, people die from flu-related complications. Because both asthma and the flu are respiratory conditions, people with asthma may experience more frequent and severe asthma attacks if they get the flu. As a result, it is particularly important for people with asthma to take steps to minimize their risk of exposure.

More information: Abstract Title: State-wide legislation positively impacts attendance for students with asthma

Abstract Title: Influenza vaccination rates among children with asthma

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