

# Region II Asthma News

The Region II Asthma Coalition of CT is committed to the education and prevention of asthma in individuals and families living in Region II



## Green Cleaning in Schools



### Did you know?

Your morning cup of coffee may do more than just help jump start your day. Scientists suspect that caffeine has real beneficial effects for those with asthma.

The chemical structure of caffeine is similar to that of theophylline, a popular asthma medication that relieves wheezing and shortness of breath by relaxing airway muscles. In fact, when caffeine is consumed and broken down in the liver, small amounts of theophylline are produced.

So is this chemical process effective at a clinical level? Continue on page 2...



*Public Act No. 09-81 (partial text)*

*On or before July 1, 2011, each local and regional board of education shall implement a green cleaning program for the cleaning and maintenance of school buildings and facilities in its district. No person shall use a cleaning product inside a school unless such cleaning product meets guidelines or environmental standards set by a national or international environmental certification program approved by the Department of Administrative Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of Environmental Protection. Such cleaning product shall, to the maximum extent possible, minimize the potential harmful impact on human health and the environment.*

This law is a tremendous step towards healthier schools and environments in the state. In order to achieve maximum benefit from the enforcement of this green cleaning system, cooperation from parents, students, school officials, nurses, custodians, and teachers is needed. Approved green cleaners should be used by custodians and nurses trained to use the best cleaner for any situation or location. This collaborative effort will ensure a healthier school environment for children and reduced exposure to asthma triggers for sensitive individuals. Make green cleaning a rule in your home or office too! See page 3 for non-toxic cleaning solution recipes.

*Source:* DPH, Environmental & Occupational Health Assessment Program, Nov. 2010, "Guidance Document: Green Cleaning Information for School Administrators, Staff, and Parents", <http://www.ct.gov/dph/>

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Save the date for these upcoming events!

## Controlling Asthma During Winter Weather



The cold, dry air of winter can be a challenge for those with asthma, making breathing a daily battle. Staying inside increases your exposure to dust mites, pet allergens, smoke, and viruses that can aggravate asthma symptoms. We all know that winter is flu season, but many don't realize that viral infections are responsible for up to 80% of asthma attacks in children during this time of the year. These winter worries make it even more important to have a written Asthma Action Plan.

Asthma sufferers can be proactive about managing winter triggers.

Use the following tips to breathe easier this winter:

- Wrap your scarf up around your mouth and breathe through your nose, which warms and humidifies the air.
- Avoid exposure to smoke from tobacco, fireplaces, and wood stoves. Have the flue of gas fireplaces and stoves serviced to ensure they don't leak. It is also helpful to use a kitchen vent when cooking.
- Asthma shouldn't prevent you from exercising outside in the winter. Take your prescribed preventer medications, protect yourself from the cold, and take time to warm up and cool down properly. Exercise is important for everyone at all times of the year. On very cold days exercise indoors. If asthma is preventing you from playing in the snow, then it is probable that your asthma is not under control. Schedule an appointment with your doctor if you regularly experience symptoms during or after exercising.
- Reduce your chances of getting the flu by getting vaccinated, washing your hands regularly, and immediately discarding tissues after use.

*Source:* Asthma Foundation WA, "Managing Asthma in Winter", <http://www.asthmawa.org.au/About-Asthma/Asthma-Factsheets/Managing-Asthma-in-Winter/>

### How Coffee Cures (continued from cover page)

The data from a few placebo controlled clinical trials suggest that caffeine initiates small improvements in airway function for as long as four hours. Even a relatively small dose of caffeine –less than that found in a cup of Starbucks- can improve lung function for up to two hours.

Though it seems that a warm mug of coffee or strong tea can provide some temporary relief, improvements in symptoms are very small. Patients with asthma should not consider caffeinated drinks a replacement for medication. It is important to note that due to their similarities in chemical structure, large amounts of caffeine can intensify the side effects of theophylline. Doctors advise people taking theophylline medication to limit their intake of foods with caffeine, including coffee, tea, and chocolate.

*Source:* A. O'Connor, Nov. 2010, "The Claim: A Cup of Coffee can Ease the Symptoms of Asthma", <http://www.nytimes.com/>



## Calendar of Events

### Open Airways for Schools (OAS) Facilitator Training

March 2, 2011, 4:00-6:30 pm  
American Lung Association in CT  
45 Ash Street, East Hartford, CT 06108  
Contact: Michelle Marichal  
Email: [mmarichal@lungne.org](mailto:mmarichal@lungne.org)  
Tel: 860.838.4370

*This comprehensive training costs \$100 per person.  
Registrations and payment due by February 25<sup>th</sup>*

### Asthma Educator Certification: Preparatory Course, Asthma Educator Institute (AEI)

April 14 – 15, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm  
Mystic Hilton  
20 Coogan Boulevard, Mystic, CT  
Contact: Tina Ragless OR Michelle Marichal  
Email: [bragless@lungne.org](mailto:bragless@lungne.org) OR  
[mmarichal@lungne.org](mailto:mmarichal@lungne.org)  
Tel: 401.533.5176 OR 860.838.4370 respectively  
*The American Lung Association developed the AEI, a two-day preparatory course for the National Asthma Educator Certification Board exam. AEI includes hands-on skills, demonstrations, and practice as well as evaluation tests to measure increase in knowledge and skills.*

### Freedom From Smoking (FFS) Facilitator Training

February 4, 2011, 8:30 – 5:00 pm  
Fee: \$200, Light breakfast & lunch included  
FFS Facilitator Manual and Participant Workbook/CD provided  
American Lung Association in Rhode Island  
260 W. Exchange St., Suite 102 B  
Providence, RI 02903  
Contact: Ann Ottalagana OR Molly Clark  
Email: [aottalagana@lungne.org](mailto:aottalagana@lungne.org) OR  
[mclark@lungne.org](mailto:mclark@lungne.org)  
Tel: 413.505.5062 OR 401.533.5171 respectively  
*Learn how to help smokers quit and reduce healthcare costs, by attending the FFS Facilitator Training now being offered throughout Southern New England. This series of trainings is designed for health care providers, occupational health nurses, wellness coordinators and human resource professionals who are interested in helping their patients, employees or members of their community quit smoking.*

Want to hear more about a certain asthma-related topic? Is there an event you want featured in the next newsletter? Contact Hilary Norcia [hnorcia@newingtonct.gov](mailto:hnorcia@newingtonct.gov) with your suggestions and events!

## Recipes for a Healthy Environment

Follow these instructions to make your own non-toxic, environmentally friendly household cleaning solutions to use in your home or office.

**All-Purpose Cleaner:** Mix ½ cup vinegar and ¼ cup baking soda into ½ gallon (2 liters) water. This can be used on windows as long as extra vinegar is not added.

**Bathroom Mold Eliminator:** Mix one part hydrogen peroxide (3%) with two parts water. Spray onto areas with mold and wait one hour before rinsing or using shower.

**Alternatives to Mothballs:** Aromatic cedar chips or juniper chips can be used in closets to repel moths. Sachets containing lavender, rosemary, vetiver, and rose petals can be effective. Dried lemon peels are natural moth deterrents too.

**Oven Cleaner:** Combine ¾ cup baking soda, ¼ cup salt and ¼ cup of water to make a thick paste. After moistening oven surfaces with a wet sponge spread the paste throughout the oven interior, avoiding bare metal and any openings. Let sit overnight, remove with a spatula and wipe clean.

**Toilet Bowl Cleaner:** Let a mixture of ¼ cup of baking soda and 1 cup vinegar sit in the bowl for a few minutes before scrubbing and rinsing. A combination of 2 parts borax to 1 part lemon juice will work too.

For more recipes visit: [http://eartheasy.com/live\\_nontoxic\\_solutions.htm](http://eartheasy.com/live_nontoxic_solutions.htm)





## Naughty or Nice?

### A guide to selecting asthma-friendly gifts for loved ones during the holidays



Finding the perfect present for family and friends during the holidays can sometimes be a challenge. The quest for the right gift becomes even trickier when the recipient is someone who has asthma. Here are some tips for spending your money wisely on items that your loved ones will be able to enjoy without having to catch their breath.

- **Pass on pets:** Children may request a furry companion for the holidays, but pet dander can trigger asthma symptoms. Instead, consider a machine washable, hypoallergenic stuffed animal. Parents should be prepared to wash it weekly in hot water to rid it of any dust mites.
- **Evade risky edibles:** Food allergens hide in all kinds of holiday treats. Better yet, purchase a gift certificate to the recipient's favorite restaurant. Attractive plates, serving platters or a fun kitchen gadget may be the perfect gift for your foodie friend.
- **Forget Fragrances:** Fragrances in perfume, candles, soaps and lotions may aggravate someone's asthma or trigger an allergic reaction. Shop at stores featuring allergen free products.
- **Bypass these blooms:** Poinsettias are the ideal festive flower this season, but it can make people with allergies or asthma sniff and sneeze. If you insist on giving someone flowers, chose roses or orchids, which tend to be less of a problem for allergy sufferers.

Source: Allergy, Immunology, & Respiratory Care, "Make Holiday Gifts Nice, Not Naughty, By Avoiding Allergy, Asthma Triggers",

**KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN**

Asthma attacks can be caused by many things you'd never expect, including stuffed animals. With new information, you can help prevent your child's asthma attacks, and avoid the emergency room.

**ATTACK ASTHMA. ACT NOW. 1-866-NO-ATTACKS WWW.NOATTACKS.ORG**

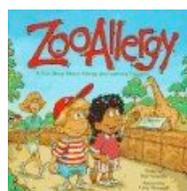
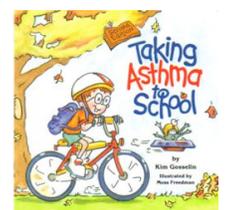
Ad Council EPA DON'T LET YOUR CHILD FEEL LIKE A FISH WITHOUT WATER

## Empowering Children to Control their Asthma Symptoms with Books



Increasing a child's understanding of asthma is as easy as a trip to the local public library. Check out some of these children's books for a fun way to educate youth about this chronic disease.

**Taking Asthma to School** by Barbara Mitchell (Ages 4-8)- This book will help initiate discussions about asthma between children, parents, and teachers. The objective of this book is to allow classmates to view their peers with asthma as normal kids who have asthma at no fault of their own.



**Zooallergy: A Fun Story About Allergy and Asthma Triggers** by Kim Gosselin (Ages 4-8)- In this story two friends go to the zoo and make a game of identifying things like animal fur, dust, and dander that would trigger their allergy or asthma.

Check out your local library, bookstore, or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) for more children's books about asthma

## Surrounded by Second-Hand Smoke



Tobacco smoke is a well-known trigger of asthma attacks. Reducing exposure to smoke can aid in relieving asthma symptoms. U.S. health data from 1999 to 2006 shows that there was a 33 percent decline in symptoms among kids who were not exposed to smoke. Unfortunately, even when no one in a family smokes, children are vulnerable to second-hand smoke from neighbors who light up. Smoke can seep through walls and shared ventilation systems in multi-unit dwellings. In fact, children living in apartments have more cotinine in their blood, a marker of tobacco exposure, than kids raised in smoke-free, detached homes. Cotinine is a byproduct of tobacco that can initiate detrimental physiologic and cognitive changes in children at increased levels.

One study published in *Pediatrics*, analyzing data from a survey of about 5,000 children between the ages of six and eighteen, showed that children raised in apartments had 45 percent more cotinine in their blood than children in detached homes. A complementary study featured in the same issue of *Pediatrics* revealed that as smoke-free laws get stricter, kids' asthma symptoms improve. Tougher laws have also been associated with a significant decrease in cotinine levels in children and adolescents. Hopefully these kinds of studies will encourage municipalities to begin banning smoking in multi-unit housing.

Source: Fox News, Dec. 2010, "Study: Kids May Be Exposed to Second-Hand Smoke by Neighbors", <http://www.foxnews.com/health/2010/12/14/study-kids-exposed-second-hand-smoke-neighbors/>

### ***Attention all parents, school nurses, teachers, and caregivers of children!***

- Do you know a child who has frequent asthma attacks?
- Do you feel like you don't know how to get a child's asthma under control?
- Do you suspect that a child's home environment may be triggering their asthma?

*Putting on AIRS is here to help!*



This program evaluates home environmental risks for asthma with the aim of improving conditions for children with asthma and ultimately reducing the frequency of asthma attacks.

First, a certified health care professional will conduct an education session, review medications, and aids in future asthma case management. Next, a registered sanitarian or respiratory therapist performs an environmental assessment of the home to identify and address indoor asthma triggers. Follow-up appointments to ensure long-term improvements are scheduled.

For more information visit <http://www.ct.gov/dph> > Disease & Prevention > Asthma > Regional Activities in CT

# Asthma Resources

American Lung Association

[www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

[www.aafa.org](http://www.aafa.org)

Centers for Disease

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Environmental Protection Agency

[www.epa.gov/asthma](http://www.epa.gov/asthma)

National Institutes of Health

<http://health.nih.gov>

The New England Asthma Regional Council

[www.asthmaregionalcouncil.org](http://www.asthmaregionalcouncil.org)

Contact your local health department or hospital for a list of programs and services

## Region II Asthma Coalition Members

WINTER 2011

Region II Asthma Coalition Newsletter

Central CT Health District

505 Silas Deane Highway

Wethersfield, CT 06109

[www.ccthd.org](http://www.ccthd.org)

Phone: 860.665.8571

Fax: 860.667.5835

E-mail: [hnorcia@newingtonct.gov](mailto:hnorcia@newingtonct.gov)



Aetna Better Health

American Lung Association

Bristol/Burlington Health District

Central CT Health District

CT Coalition of Environmental Justice

CT Department of Public Health

CT Children's Medical Center –Asthma Center

Community Health Network

Community Health Services

Farmington Valley Health District

Hartford Health and Human Services Department

Hartford Public Schools

Manchester Health Department

Merck Pharmaceuticals

New Britain Asthma Initiative

New Britain Health Department

North Central District Health Department

Plainville Health Department

West Hartford/Bloomfield Health District

Windsor Health Department

