Treatment & Prevention

Assess Asthma Severity
• Sufferers should have an initial assessment done to determine severity of symptoms & level of therapy needed

Use Medication as directed
• Your doctor may prescribe inhalers and/or pills to treat your asthma

Control Environmental Exposures
• Assess exposure to allergens & create plan to reduce exposure (dust mite protectors on bedding, HEPA Filters, HEPA vacuums etc.)
• Avoid extreme heat, which can aggravate allergies and asthma. Use home air conditioners

Treatment/Prevention: (cont.)

Use Asthma Action Plans
• All people who have asthma should receive a written asthma action plan to guide their self-management efforts

Schedule follow-up visits
• In order to assess & monitor asthma control and modify treatments, if necessary, schedule routine follow-up visits with your clinician

FACT & INFORMATION SHEET
www.chicagopsr.org

Asthma & Climate Change
www.chicagopsr.org
Asthma:

**Asthma** is a chronic lung disease that inflames & narrows the airways. Asthma causes recurring periods of wheezing (a whistling sound when breathing), chest tightness, shortness of breath, & coughing. The coughing often occurs at night or early in the morning. Possessing a biological parent who has or has had Asthma increases your chances of developing the condition. If both parents have asthma, the risk increases. Like many other diseases, however; asthma likely results in part from a genetic predisposition toward developing the disease and in part from exposures that one encounters in the world around us. In other words, asthma is part heredity, part environment. Warmer weather, resulting from climate change, has been linked to increased allergy & asthma symptoms.

**EPIDEMIOLOGY:**

Asthma affects people of all ages but most often starts during childhood. In the United States, more than 25 million people are known to have asthma. About 7 million of these people are children. According to recent data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), asthma now affects one in ten children in the United States, a 12 percent increase over the last decade.

Asthma prevalence in Illinois & throughout the United States is high. In Illinois, 14.8 percent of children ages 5 to 9 and 15.6 percent of children ages 10 to 14 had previously been diagnosed with the disease. Though generally not higher than national rates, Asthma prevalence in Chicago is also high. More recently, a survey of elementary school students found that 13 percent had been diagnosed with asthma, with higher rates in low-income & high crime neighborhoods. Differences in morbidity & mortality are far greater than differences in prevalence. Earlier studies noted five times higher deaths rates in African-Americans & strong & inverse associations between asthma hospitalizations & deaths with community income level.

Asthma related deaths have decreased recently in the US & in Chicago, although racial disparities in deaths increased, with black Chicagoans being eight times more likely to die from asthma than non-Hispanic whites. Racial & economic disparities in asthma morbidity & mortality, in light of fairly modest differences in prevalence, suggest that there are potentially modifiable social factors contributing to disease outcomes.

**CLIMATE CHANGE & THE ENVIRONMENT**

Research has shown that...

- Warmer temps, caused by climate change, can increase allergic symptoms. This increase has been shown to exacerbate asthma, especially in children
- Ozone and Particle pollution can cause asthma attacks
  - Ozone make people more sensitive to asthma triggers
  - When Ozone levels are high, more asthma attacks require medical attention
- Proximity to coal plants (top producer of carbon emissions) can aggravate asthma symptoms
- Dust mites, molds, cockroaches, pet dander, & secondhand smoke trigger asthma attacks
- Exposure to smoke can cause asthma in pre-school aged children