

Breathing Easy: Controlling Asthma Triggers

Mike Bradshaw

Extension Specialist, Health and Safety



Kansas State University
Agricultural Experiment
Station and Cooperative
Extension Service



Before the Lesson

- Review this lesson guide and the fact sheet, *Breathing Easy: Controlling Asthma Triggers*
- Make copies of the evaluation form on the last page of this leader's guide for distribution to each participant at the conclusion of the meeting.

Other Resources that may be helpful to support this lesson:

- Video tape *Health at Home Controlling Asthma* – Available from your local K-State Research and Extension office
- Tabletop display on asthma triggers, available at the county extension office or area office
- Asthma Quiz—located at the end of this leader's guide

Materials Needed

- Copies of the fact sheet *Breathing Easy: Controlling Asthma Triggers*
- Extra pencils for those who may not have brought one
- Small drinking straws so participants can experience a simulated asthma episode or attack
- Copies of the evaluation form at the end of this leader's guide

Objective of the Lesson

Participants at the end of this lesson will be able to:

1. Identify environmental triggers of asthma

2. Identify symptoms of a person who is having an asthma attack
3. Describe steps to take to reduce exposures to asthma triggers

Community Service Activities

1. Set up asthma displays at: Health fairs, schools, public meetings, and public libraries. (Check out displays at the extension office or area office.)
2. Organize a community support group for asthmatics and their caregivers.
3. Organize an asthma community awareness call-in show for TV or radio stations.
4. Encourage a local newspaper to run a feature article on what it is like to have asthma.
5. Organize a workshop for asthmatics and caregivers to learn more about the disease.

Experiencing Asthma Activity

Say something like: "I have provided a straw to help you experience what it is like to have an asthma episode. Those of you who have a heart or lung condition, like asthma, may not want to participate in the jog in place portion of this activity."

Please jog or walk in place for 2 minutes. I will time you. Place the straw in your mouth and breathe only through the straw by pinching your nose closed. How does it feel?

Caution!

There is far more information in this lesson than can be covered in 30 to 60 minutes. You will have to limit the discussion time.

Asthma Quiz

You may want to start this lesson by giving the short Asthma Quiz to test the knowledge of lesson participants. You may say something like; “I want to test your understanding of the disease asthma. One or two of the questions are a little tricky.” If you use the quiz, hand it out before the start of the lesson.

Format the quiz so that questions are on one side of a paper and the answers are on the other. Remind participants that they can look at the answers after all questions have been answered. You may not want to take time discussing the answers; most of the quiz content will be covered in the lesson.

Lesson

Using the fact sheet, *Breathing Easy: Controlling Asthma Triggers*, teach participants the following topics: If time permits you may ask if there are any question or comments after each topic is discussed.

1. What is asthma and how serious is the disease?
2. Review from the fact sheet what causes asthma.

To help participants understand what it is like to experience an asthma episode, have a participant describe how it feels. If no one has had the disease, you may want to do the “Experience Asthma” activity.

3. Asthma triggers.
4. Who is most likely to develop the disease?
5. Treatment. Be sure to discuss the importance of environmental controls.

6. Preventing asthma attacks. This section can be discussed by using the fact sheet *Breathing Easy: Controlling Asthma Triggers* or by using the 12-minute video, *Health at Home – Controlling Asthma*.

Express appreciation to the group for their participation.

Ask them to take a few minutes to fill out the evaluation form. Please return the forms to your county extension FCS agent.

Answers to Asthma Quiz Questions

- 1. False** - Asthma is not an emotional or psychological disease, although strong emotions can sometimes make asthma worse.
- 2. False** - Allergies are one of the factors that can trigger asthma attacks. Not all asthmatics are allergic. Many people are allergic, but do not have asthma.
- 3. True** - Exercise is good for most people — with or without asthma. When asthma is under good control, people with asthma are able to play most sports and live active lives. For people whose asthma is brought on by exercise, medicines can be taken before exercising to help avoid an episode.
- 4. False** - There is no cure for asthma. However, people can control or manage their asthma by: Working with a physician or other health care provider to develop an individualized asthma management plan. Learning to notice early signs of an asthma episode and to start treatment. Avoiding things that can cause asthma episodes. Knowing when to get medical help for a severe episode.
- 5. False** - This is kind of a trick question. Some children have asthma symptoms that clear during adolescence while others worsen, but the tendency to overly sensitive airways remains. Asthma is a chronic state of hyper-responsiveness.
- 6. True** - A child has less than 10 percent chance of developing asthma if neither parent has the disease. When one parent has the disease, the chance rises to 25 percent; and when both parents have the disease, the child has a 50 percent chance.
- 7. False** - It is the protein found in the pet's saliva, dander, hair, and urine that causes allergies in some individuals. ALL pets with fur or feathers have dander, saliva, and urine, and there are no particular breeds that are better for people with asthma and allergies. Pets without fur or feathers, such as fish, may be better for people with asthma who are allergic to cats and dogs.
- 8. False** - After a pet is removed, pet allergens can remain for up to several months. To remove pet allergens, clean all walls, floors, and other surfaces thoroughly.
- 9. True** - According to the National Academy of Sciences study, released in January 2000, evidence suggests that secondhand smoke may be a cause of asthma in preschool children.
- 10. False** - Given the wide range of asthma triggers, it can be extremely difficult or costly to avoid all known asthma triggers. It is important to identify which are your asthma triggers and seek to reduce exposure to your triggers. Talk to your doctor about identifying your asthma triggers, and keep a journal to help track the activities that may trigger your asthma episodes.



Asthma Quiz

Circle the correct answer

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| 1. Asthma is an emotional or psychological illness. | T | F | 7. Some dog breeds, such as Chihuahuas, are better for people with asthma and allergies. | T | F |
| 2. All people with asthma have allergies. | T | F | 8. All pet allergens will be cleared from a room once a pet is removed. | T | F |
| 3. A number of Olympic medallists have asthma. | T | F | 9. Secondhand smoke may cause the development of asthma in preschool children. | T | F |
| 4. Asthma can be cured. | T | F | | | |
| 5. Children outgrow asthma. | T | F | | | |
| 6. A family history is a good predictor of whether or not a child will develop asthma. | T | F | 10. People with asthma should avoid all known asthma triggers. | T | F |

Program Evaluation

County _____ Date _____

Circle answers to questions I and II:

I. How do I rate this program in general? Excellent Good Fair Poor

II. As a result of this program, I gained knowledge about:

Possible cause of asthma Much Some Little None

Symptoms Much Some Little None

Treatment options Much Some Little None

Asthma triggers Much Some Little None

Additional comments/suggestions:

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned. Publications from Kansas State University are available on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.oznet.ksu.edu> Publications from Kansas State University may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In either case, credit Mike Bradshaw, *Breathing Easy: Controlling Asthma Triggers Leader's Guide*, August 2003.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service , Manhattan, Kansas

MF-2598

August 2003

It is the policy of Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service that all persons shall have equal opportunity and access to its educational programs, services, activities, and materials without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or disability. Kansas State University is an equal opportunity organization. These materials may be available in alternative formats.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Marc A. Johnson, Director.