

## Asthma and Influenza

As the weather starts to cool down, the cold and flu season will soon be upon us.

### **The Facts:**

- > Approximately 2,800 Australians die every year either directly from the seasonal flu, complications due to the flu, or pneumonia.
- > Adults and children with chronic illnesses (such as asthma) are at a higher risk of complications from the virus.
- > Colds and flu can be a trigger for some people with asthma, and can make your symptoms worse.
- > Flu vaccinations are the single most effective action in helping fight the spread of flu in the community.
- > The vaccine provides protection from about two weeks after the injection, and lasts for about one year (so even if you were immunised last year, you need to have the vaccine again this year).
- > The flu shot cannot give you the flu – as the vaccine does not contain any active virus.
- > In Victoria, under the National Immunisation Program, the criteria state that an annual free influenza immunisation is available to children or adults with severe asthma.

The vaccination is available now, so contact your doctor or immunisation provider to make an appointment. Many workplaces provide free vaccinations for staff to help prevent absenteeism during the winter months, so it is a good idea to ask your employer if this is available to you.



For further information please contact the Asthma Foundation of Victoria on 1800 645 130 or email [schools@asthma.org.au](mailto:schools@asthma.org.au)

## Winter and Asthma

With the winter months approaching, it is important to be aware of the triggers that can affect your asthma at this time of year.

### **Sudden changes in temperature**

Certain weather situations like very cold temperatures, humidity and dry air can trigger asthma symptoms.

In a school environment, students are exposed to sudden temperature changes many times during the day as they go between heated classroom environments to outdoor activities and lunch breaks.

Wearing a scarf over the mouth and nose is recommended as it can help to warm the air as you breathe in.

Exercise-induced asthma may be exacerbated by breathing in colder air than usual, so ensure that you take your reliever puffer 5-20 minutes prior to exercise, warm up adequately, monitor your symptoms during exercise, and have a blue reliever puffer handy in case of an asthma attack.

### **Thunderstorms**

Thunderstorms can be an asthma trigger for some people, as raindrops can cause grains to be broken down into hundreds of tiny allergen-containing particles – allowing them to penetrate the lungs.

If you experience asthma symptoms during thunderstorms, it is best to stay inside with windows closed, and ensure that you update your asthma action plan with your doctor outlining the management of your day to day asthma, what to do if your symptoms worsen, and the first aid procedure in the event of an asthma attack.



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