

# 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



## Coincidence or Correlation?

### Parallels Between Increasing Obesity and Childhood Asthma Rates

Researchers have noticed that, similar to trends observed for the obesity pandemic, the prevalence of asthma worldwide has risen considerably since the 1970s. Currently, up to 37 percent of teenagers worldwide exhibit some symptoms of asthma. To investigate these patterns, a team of researchers from England and Finland evaluated a group of 7,000 teenagers to test the hypothesis that excess body weight was associated with asthma in children and teens. In a related study mothers who did not complete high school were more likely to light up while pregnant than mothers that had earned their GED.

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## Did you know?

You may be astonished to hear that about 14 percent of American women smoke throughout their pregnancy. It may be even more surprising that prenatal exposure to tobacco smoke is more likely to result in severe asthma than exposure after birth during the first two years of life. This finding from a study conducted by the University of California, San Francisco demonstrates how vulnerable a fetus is to the harmful effects of maternal health choices, such as smoking, nutrition, and alcohol consumption. In fact, children with severe asthma were more than three times more likely to have been exposed to tobacco smoke in utero than children with milder forms of asthma.

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## Prenatal exposure to smoke linked to asthma

Lower levels of education are associated with lower incomes for families, which is one of the greatest risks for asthma. This creates a problem for parents that have to take time off from work to care for a child with asthma. These findings support public health initiatives that discourage smoking while pregnant and address health disparities that have the potential to have more widespread, beneficial health outcomes. See below to learn more about how being overweight when becoming pregnant increases the risk of asthma in kids.

Original Article: Action to Quit, "Study Shows Deep Link Between Smoking While Pregnant and Asthma", <http://www.actiontoquit.org/news/study-shows-deep-link-between-smoking-while-pregnant-and-asthma/>, August 25, 2011.

## Possible associations between patterns in childhood asthma and obesity rates

The results, published in The Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health, revealed that teens whose mothers had been overweight or obese immediately prior to becoming pregnant were up to 30 percent more likely to have asthma or a history of wheezing. Furthermore, the teens whose mothers were heaviest at the time of pregnancy were nearly 50 percent more likely to have a history of severe wheezing. This suggests a positive relationship between amount of excess weight and severity of asthma symptoms. It is important to note that although there seems to be a strong association between maternal obesity and asthma in children and adolescents, the researchers found no causal link between these two health factors. This disease linkage is not surprising considering that women who are obese when they become pregnant are more likely to experience complications, such as increased risk of stillbirths, preterm deliveries, and gestational hypertension. Past studies show that being overweight while pregnant can throw a woman's metabolic, hormonal and ovarian activity out of balance. In regards to increased risk of asthma, it is thought that excess weight triggers spikes in levels of the hormone leptin, which binds to receptors in the fetal lung and may be essential to the lung development of the child. Future research may uncover the biological mechanism responsible for the parallel increases in obesity and childhood asthma over the past few decades.

Original Article: Anahad O'Connor, "Asthma More Likely Among Children of Overweight Mothers", New York Times Well Blog, <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/>, August 17, 2011.

## Hey Kids! Never Thought You'd Hear Mom or Dad Say This!

Every week parents remind their children to walk the dog, brush their teeth, do their homework, and take out the trash among other chores. But if you're a kid or teen with asthma, if Mom or Dad tells you to make your bed, tell her that it's actually better for your health if you don't. A study found that leaving beds unmade results in fewer dust mites, a trigger for asthma attacks. When the sheets aren't tucked in tight, sheets are exposed to the air and moisture can fully evaporate, which avoids creating a home for these critters.

If your mom still bugs you about making your bed in the morning, remind her that there are probably about 1.5 million dust mites in your bed already and you don't want any more making themselves comfortable. You can also ask her for special covers for your pillow and mattress to reduce the dust mites and other allergens that may be keeping you from sleeping soundly at night. Who knows, after you show her how smart and responsible you are maybe she'll make your bedtime just a little later!

Original Article: Healthmonitor, "Make your bedroom a sweet spot!", Allergies & Asthma Magazine, Spring 2011, Vol. 17 No. 1



# Hartford Courant

## Keep Courant! Asthma News in Connecticut Have a Question About Asthma? Just Ask Elmo...

A new public service announcement starring Sesame Street characters is catching kids attention and teaching them about asthma. As a result of collaboration between UnitedHealthcare, a Minnesota-based health insurer, and the nonprofit organization that owns the well-known television show, two web-based programs providing health information about lead poisoning and asthma have been developed with kids in mind. UnitedHealthcare provides health insurance coverage to many Medicaid recipients and considering asthma is increasing in children from low-income families, the company has a significant financial interest in managing asthma and preventing lead poisoning to help keep costs down. The “A is for Asthma” program provides information for kids and caregivers in a fun, easy to understand format. The program is offered in both English and Spanish. Visit

[www.sesamestreet.org/asthma](http://www.sesamestreet.org/asthma) for more tips, tool kits, and topic discussions.

Original Article: Matthew Sturdevant, “Sesame Street, UnitedHealthcare Offer Health Tips Regarding Asthma, Avoid Lead Poisoning”, Courant.com,

[http://articles.courant.com/2011-08-22/business/hc-united-health-sesame-street-20110819\\_1\\_lead-poisoning-asthma-lead-based-paint](http://articles.courant.com/2011-08-22/business/hc-united-health-sesame-street-20110819_1_lead-poisoning-asthma-lead-based-paint) August 22, 2011



## Calendar of Events

### Healthy Families: Asthma Initiative

October 1, 2011 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.  
FaithCare Wellness Center of Hartford, LLC.  
277 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06106  
Email: [tfrankhauser@faithcare.net](mailto:tfrankhauser@faithcare.net)  
Phone: 860.241.9355

*Helping people with asthma breathe easier, the Healthy Families: Asthma Initiative (HFAI) brings free asthma services to Hartford. HFAI brings the 'Not One More Life' (NOML) program to Hartford. NOML is a nationally known asthma program that is based in communities of faith.*

### CT Coalition for Environmental Justice:

#### 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Environmental Justice Conference

October 29, 2011 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.  
UConn School of Business  
100 Constitution Plaza, Hartford, CT 06103  
Email: [dawn.simonsen@environmental-justice.org](mailto:dawn.simonsen@environmental-justice.org)  
Phone: 860.548.1133

*John Warner, a well-known chemist and environmental health advocate, will deliver the keynote speech at CCEJ's major annual event. Conference topics include Cleaning Up Brownfields, Restoring Community Health and Business, Organic: Creating a Toxic-Free Food System, and Green Chemistry: K-12 and Higher Education. For more information visit [www.environmental-justice.org](http://www.environmental-justice.org).*

## White House Decisions Clouded by Economic Times: A Victory for the Business Community and a Loss for Public Health Advocates

Environmental and public health advocates will have to wait until 2013 before the draft Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards are reconsidered since President Obama requested its withdrawal at the beginning of September. Though the president stated that ensuring the health of Americans was important, he justified his decision by citing the need to reduce regulatory burdens on business during challenging economic times. The standards proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would have reduced levels of ground-level ozone air pollution. Ground-level ozone or smog is created when emissions from industries, motor vehicle exhaust, gasoline vapors, and other sources react in sunlight. Inhaling high levels of ozone results in negative health effects including asthma attacks, respiratory illness, and impaired lung function, which can lead to hospitalizations or even death. Charles D. Connor, president and CEO of the American Lung Association expressed his disappointment with the administration by saying, "It's final decision not to enact a more protective ozone health standard is jeopardizing the health of millions of Americans, which is inexcusable". The interim executive director of the American Public Health Association, Alan Baker, echoed this sentiment by stating, "We are extremely disappointed with the delay of these lifesaving standard...We urge the administration to reconsider its decision and strengthen the health protections provided under the Clean Air Act based on the overwhelming scientific evidence."

Original Article: American Public Health Association, "Obama delays smog standards", Public Health Newswire, <http://www.publichealthnewswire.org/?p=1118>, September 2, 2011.

**National Ambient Air Quality Standards**

Pollutant	Primary Standards		Secondary Standards	
	Level	Averaging Time	Level	Averaging Time
<a href="#">Carbon Monoxide</a>	9 ppm (10 mg/m <sup>3</sup> )	8-hour <a href="#">(1)</a>	None	
	35 ppm (40 mg/m <sup>3</sup> )	1-hour <a href="#">(1)</a>		
<a href="#">Lead</a>	0.15 µg/m <sup>3</sup> <a href="#">(2)</a>	Rolling 3-Month Average	Same as Primary	
<a href="#">Nitrogen Dioxide</a>	53 ppb <a href="#">(3)</a>	Annual (Arithmetic Average)	Same as Primary	
	100 ppb	1-hour <a href="#">(4)</a>	None	
<a href="#">Particulate Matter (PM<sub>10</sub>)</a>	150 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	24-hour <a href="#">(5)</a>	Same as Primary	
<a href="#">Particulate Matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>)</a>	15.0 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Annual <a href="#">(6)</a> (Arithmetic Average)	Same as Primary	
	35 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	24-hour <a href="#">(7)</a>	Same as Primary	
<a href="#">Ozone</a>	0.075 ppm (2008 std)	8-hour <a href="#">(8)</a>	Same as Primary	
	0.08 ppm (1997 std)	8-hour <a href="#">(9)</a>	Same as Primary	
	0.12 ppm	1-hour <a href="#">(10)</a>	Same as Primary	
<a href="#">Sulfur Dioxide</a>	0.03 ppm <a href="#">(11)</a> (1971 std)	Annual (Arithmetic Average)	0.5 ppm	3-hour <a href="#">(1)</a>
	0.14 ppm <a href="#">(11)</a> (1971 std)	24-hour <a href="#">(1)</a>		
	75 ppb <a href="#">(12)</a>	1-hour	None	

The National Ambient Air Quality Standards (40 CFR part 50) are set for six pollutants, called "criteria" pollutants, which are considered harmful to public health and the environment. These standards are part of the Clean Air Act. The primary standards set limits to protect public health, including the wellness of vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and asthmatics. The secondary standards are set to protect public welfare in terms of protecting against decreased visibility and damage to animals, crops, vegetation, and buildings. The units of measure are part per million (ppm) by volume, parts per billion (ppb) by volume, milligrams per cubic meter of air (mg/m<sup>3</sup>), and micrograms per cubic meter of air (µg/m<sup>3</sup>). Visit <http://www.epa.gov/air/criteria.html> for full footnotes.

## Are You Part of the PACT?

Do you feel like your asthma or your child's asthma is well-controlled? Do you have a reliable way to track your management of asthma? Were you prepared with questions regarding your asthma for your doctor at your last visit? If you answered no to any of these questions the Personalized Assessment and Control Tool (PACT) provided by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America can help. The Asthma PACT™ is a free service to assist individuals and caregivers with asthma management. The easy to use surveys are based on accurate, up-to-date health information. The personalized reports are generated according to your specific survey responses and are supplemented by free educational resources. Some of the advantages of PACT are round-the-clock access and the ability to save answers and return to complete or retake surveys. Don't forget to print out reports for your records and share them with your health care provider. To learn more or take the PACT visit <http://www.asthmapact.org/>.



## What is the Putting On Airs Program?

***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

**Over the past two years 58 children residing in 18 towns throughout Hartford County have been referred to the Putting on Airs Program and 27 have received home visits!**

# 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)  
 CT Department of Public Health  
<http://www.ct.gov/dph/asthma>

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

## SUMMER 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)

**Got ideas? We want to hear them!**  
 If there is a topic, event, advertisement, website, or book that you would like to see featured in this newsletter, please contact Angela Colantonio at [acolantonio@mph.uchc.edu](mailto:acolantonio@mph.uchc.edu).



## Region II Asthma Coalition Members

- Aetna Better Health
- American Lung Association
- 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
- FaithCare, Inc.
- Farmington Valley Health District
- Hartford Health and Human Services Department
- Hartford Public Schools
- Merck Pharmaceuticals
- New Britain Asthma Initiative
- New Britain Health Department
- North Central District Health Department
- Plainville Health Department
- Windsor Health Department

**Want to be a member of the Region II Asthma Coalition? Contact Hilary Norcia at 860.665.8571**