



Is your child ready?

## PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR THE SEPTEMBER PEAK

If your child shows symptoms of asthma when he or she gets a cold, talk to your doctor about which medication might be appropriate for preventing asthma attacks that may be triggered by common cold viruses. Also ensure that your child has his or her rescue medication on hand at all times. This will not treat the underlying inflammation and prevent asthma attacks, but it is what your child will need most should an asthma attack occur.

### SARA'S READY... ARE YOU?

Being ready for the September Asthma Peak is one way to help ensure that your child will be spending more time with friends at school, and less time at home, or worse – in the emergency room of a hospital.

Being prepared means  
you'll feel a lot better about  
September, too!

Find out more about managing the environmental  
triggers of asthma at [www.asthma.ca](http://www.asthma.ca)



**Asthma.ca**<sup>™</sup>  
Asthma Canada

For your asthma and allergy questions please call  
1-866-787-4050 or email [info@asthma.ca](mailto:info@asthma.ca)



**Asthma.ca**<sup>™</sup>  
Asthma Canada

# Sara's ready for school.

But for kids with asthma...  
**September** can be  
a cruel month.



## THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR...

Canadian researchers have found that the September back-to-school period brings a dramatic increase in hospitalizations for children with asthma. This increase starts after the return to school and reaches its peak in September.

This period is now recognized as the **September Asthma Peak**.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CAUSES?

Research shows that more than 60 per cent of children admitted to emergency rooms with asthma also suffered from rhinovirus (the common cold). Rhinovirus and other respiratory infections are common triggers of asthma symptoms, especially among school-aged children.

Other studies suggest that up to 85 per cent of childhood asthma attacks may be triggered by viral infections. These attacks are also associated with a rise in seasonal allergens and reduced compliance with asthma controller medications.

## WHAT MAKES SEPTEMBER WORSE THAN OTHER MONTHS?

Kids returning to school in September face increasing exposure to viral infections. These can be a significant trigger of asthma symptoms. Children may also be exposed to allergens such as dust mites, moulds and animal dander. September is also the ragweed season. All these allergens are potent asthma triggers. This is why it is so important that your child's asthma be adequately controlled year-round.

*"When children go back to school in September, they face increased exposure to viral infections which can trigger asthma symptoms."* — Neil Johnston, Epidemiologist, Firestone Institute for Respiratory Health, St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton, Ontario.

## WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN ASTHMA ATTACK?

Asthma attacks occur when the airways become inflamed or swollen and produce mucus. This is usually caused by exposure to asthma triggers such as allergies, exercise, colds and other viral respiratory infections. The muscles around the airways start to spasm and constrict, narrowing the airways and making it difficult to breathe.



## HOW CAN YOU HELP PREPARE YOUR CHILD?

### YOUR CHILD'S ASTHMA ACTION PLAN

The Asthma Action Plan is an effective tool that can be used to help manage your child's asthma and help ensure that it stays adequately controlled. List your child's triggers, daily medicine needs and the rescue medicines he or she may need for quick relief during an asthma attack, or when signs of an attack begin to show.

Tip: share your child's Asthma Action Plan with your child's school, teachers, babysitters and your family members.

### BE AN INVOLVED PARENT

It would also be a good idea to visit your child's school to ensure it has policies in place to help create a trigger-free environment for learning, exercise and play. The Asthma Society of Canada has an In School Asthma Information Kit that is available to any school at no cost. You can order one today by calling our toll free number: 1-866-787-4050.

### OTHER WAYS YOU CAN HELP

Keep a diary of how your child is feeling at different times of the day. Keep track of how regularly your child is taking his or her asthma medications. Also note any other things that may appear to worsen your child's asthma. These may include exercise, colds, allergies, tobacco smoke, household cleaners, weather changes, etc. Learn your child's warning signs and try to catch an attack before it gets worse. Talk to your child's doctor if you feel the need to make any changes to your child's action plan.

## THE ASTHMA SOCIETY OF CANADA ENCOURAGES YOU TO FOLLOW THESE 10 TIPS TO ENSURE YOUR CHILD HAS A SAFE RETURN TO SCHOOL:

1. Develop or update a written Asthma Action Plan with your family doctor and make sure to provide a copy to your child's school.
2. Speak to your child's school about their asthma policies including inhaler use.
3. Identify triggers that make your child's asthma worse and teach him/her how best to avoid them.
4. Treat allergies with anti-histamines, nasal steroids, allergy shots or pills, to help avoid an asthma attack, as per recommendations from your physician.
5. Ensure your child takes his/her asthma medication throughout the year, even when symptom-free.
6. Help your child understand their asthma, including teaching them how to use their medication properly and knowing how to monitor their daily symptoms.
7. Teach your child correct hand-washing techniques and the importance of hand-washing to avoid catching a cold.
8. If your children are sick, keep them home from school.
9. Ensure your child, and everyone in your home, has received their influenza (flu) vaccination.
10. Schedule regular asthma check-ups with your healthcare practitioner to ensure your child's asthma is properly controlled.