

Caring for Children with Asthma and Allergies

Newsletter 102
 Provider Edition
 May 2007

*This Month's Theme:
 Everybody Move!*

The snow is melted. April showers have passed. It's time to get out and move your body.

What's Inside?

Fun Ways to Help Children Stay Fit

Literacy Theme Activities 3

Theme Projects 4

Just for Fun 5

Your Questions 6

Next Month

**Back to Basics
 Child Development**

In April's issue we wrote about the possibility of opening a family child care home that specialized in taking care of children with special needs. While technically we don't classify children with asthma and allergies as having special needs, they do need a child care provider who understands their sensitivities and can provide an environment that is safe and comfortable. You cannot totally control the air a child breathes or the allergens in the area outside your home. However, you can set up a home that's as allergy free as possible with some careful planning. The following are suggestions for operating a family child care home for children with environmental allergies and food allergies.

Environmental Allergies

Children with environmental allergies may be sensitive to pollens, molds, mildews and dust mites, as well as chemical allergens, such as formaldehyde, home cleaning solutions or home fragrances. The following guidelines will help you reduce the amount of indoor allergens. Some of them are simple and some of them will cost you hundreds of dollars. Meet as many of them as you can.

- Do not keep pets in your home. Fish tanks can be safe for a child with allergies as long

as the tank is kept clean and free of any mold and mildew.

- Remove curtains and use blinds or shades. Curtains hold dust and can harbor mold and mildew, especially when it's humid .



- Use as little upholstered furniture as possible. Cover your furniture with washable covers and wash them in hot water to remove dust mites.
- Have as little carpet as possible. Vacuum the carpets you have at the end of the day. Get down on the floor and smell the carpet. If there is any scent of mildew, take up the carpet and replace the pad underneath. Have the carpet professionally cleaned.
- Invest in a home air filter that contains a Hepa filter and use it where the children play and sleep most frequently.
- Inspect all window and door frames and bathrooms and kitchens,

including seals on refrigerators for signs of mildew. Clean these areas thoroughly using bleach to kill the growth and then clean them on a regular basis to inhibit new growth.

- Inspect the basement for signs of mold or mildew. Keep a dehumidifier in the basement to keep the area dry.
- Read the manuals for your heating and humidifying systems. Change the filters as often as recommended using allergen reducing filters.
- Make sure all the cleaning products in the house are fragrance-free. Check with parents about their children's sensitivities. Even natural citrus cleaning products can be a problem for a child sensitive to citrus.
- Wood play sets and decking materials are beautiful but can contain harmful pesticides and mold. Plastic or metal are better choices for most sensitive children and are easily cleaned.
- Make sure your house is free of unwanted pests. Their droppings can cause asthma and allergy symptoms.
- Cover outdoor sand boxes so the neighborhood cats don't mistake them for a community litter box.
- If you are purchasing new cabinets or furniture, make sure it's formaldehyde free. You cannot remove formaldehyde from wood. Try to avoid bringing it in the house.

Allergy and Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics

A web-site containing Information for asthma educators, family members and caretakers and a program to educate children with allergies and asthma.

www.aanma.org

Food Allergies

Some children's food allergies are deadly. If you choose to take care of children with severe allergies, you must be willing to rid your kitchen of that food or separate the food into a child safe cabinet for your personal use when not caring for the children. This may seem extreme, but even the scent of an allergic food can cause a sensitive child to react.

It's best to set up your program and take care of children with a single food allergy. For instance, you can set up a gluten-free home or a peanut-free home. Setting up a home for children who have different food allergies will be very difficult, unless you have many years of experience with allergic children. Even if you ask the parents to bring all the child's food and drink, you still need to worry about sharing and cross contamination at the table.

Narrowing your specialty is a better choice. While you may get children who have multiple allergies, you are not likely to get five children with five different food allergies.

- Read every label and separate the food that contains the allergen into a separate cabinet. Make sure you know all names of the derivatives of the food. You can find the information at www.aanma.org, under the farmer's market icon. Clear all the information you're using and all food items with parents. They will be more than happy to help you with this task. Separating food helps avoid mistakes or accidents. Children who are able to walk, are able to grab food from a counter or lower shelf in a cabinet or refrigerator and make themselves ill.
- Read every label when shopping. If you have questions, ask the parent before purchasing the food item.
- Make a list of special treats that are safe for the child to eat. Print this list and share it with the other parents, so they can shop accordingly when they want to bring in something for a celebration. Request that treats are brought in

Books for Adults

The Kid Friendly Food Allergy Cookbook

by Leslie Hammond and Lynne Marie Rominger

My House is Killing Me: The Home Guide for Families with Allergies and Asthma

by Jeffrey C. May

their original packaging. If parents want to bake, request a list of the ingredients with brand names. Ingredients, such as chocolate chips, can be nut-free if obtained from the right source.

- If you decide you will be using the allergy producing foods when the children are not in the house, purchase large packages of inexpensive sponges. Take a fresh sponge out every morning the children are in the house so you know the dangerous food is not on the sponge and then spread over the kitchen.
- Make sure you don't cross contaminate food. For instance don't use the peanut butter knife in the jelly.
- Make sure all your family members understand and are supportive of your choice to provide this service.

Severe allergies are frightening for parents. Knowing a small slip up can cause an emergency room visit can make a parents work day intolerable. Providing them a safe place for their children is a priceless gift. Make sure you're up to the task, educate yourself, be open to working very closely with parents and you'll be providing a unique service for some special children.

Books About Good Health

Finn Cooks by Birte Müller

Finn's Mom is tired of arguing with Finn about eating a healthy diet. So she makes a deal, allowing him to purchase and eat anything he wants for one day. Finn fills his shopping cart with all his favorites. He eats candy, chocolate and doughnuts for breakfast and cheese curls for all day channel surfing. But Finn never made it through the day. He felt so bad he had to go to bed. When he awakens he decides to go out and play, walking by his decadent feast still left on the table. For dinner, he gives in to his mother's wise advice and reheats the healthy dinner left from the night before. (ages 2 - 6)

Babar's Yoga for Elephants by Laurent De Brunhoff

All that Spring air and running around revs up healthy toddlers. Babar can help slow them down with some clearly illustrated yoga poses. He demonstrates the simple cobra, which toddlers do with great ease, to the more complicated sun salutation, which toddlers can learn after many weeks of repetition. Towards the end of the book Babar teaches children about the peace and harmony that yoga brings him wherever he travels. This can be a great change of pace when everyone is feeling a bit frazzled and wound up. (any age)

The Busy Body Book by Lizzy Rockwell

When children become more verbal they begin to ask questions about their bodies and how they work. Vibrant colored illustrations of children using their bodies help the author explain how children move, breathe and digest food. There are five illustrations of our anatomy, including the skeleton, muscles, brains and nerves, lungs, heart and blood vessels and the stomach. Each one is labeled with just enough information so young children understand the process. Your youngest children will have fun labeling the children's activities illustrated on the last pages. (ages 3 - 8)

From Head to Toe by Eric Carle

Toddlers are challenged to move like the animals do using Eric Carle's striking illustrations on bright white backgrounds. See if they can clap like a seal or arch like a cat. The book is published in heavy cardboard and a perfect size for toddler hands. Use the story to get children up at circle time and allow them freedom of movement. (ages 1 ½ - 5)

Take Advantage of Public Parks

Part of running a successful family child care program is making sure you have adequate space for children to play outdoors. Many in the suburbs have large enough backyards. If you live in an apartment or on a property with limited outdoor space, you'll need to be more creative. Luckily for you, Essex County has an extensive Parks Program. Public parks provide a place for children to run and tumble in a very large space. They also provide playgrounds, where they can meet and socialize with other children and you can meet other caregivers to talk with. Find the park closest to you. If necessary, take public transportation and make this part of your every day routine. Movement and sunlight are the best ways to keep you and the children in a healthy state of mind.



Movement and Music

Musical Freeze

Musical freeze encourages children to run, but also teaches them how to stop and still their bodies. The game is simple. When the music goes on the children should run and tumble freely. When the music stops, they have to stop immediately and freeze in that position. The person who is “it”, sees who moves first. That person then becomes “it” and you repeat the game. Once the children get the hang of this, they’ll attempt to freeze in the most inventive poses, adding another creative dimension to the game. If you’re at the park without access to music, sing.

Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body, it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity.

John F. Kennedy

Miss Mary Mack A Toddler Progression

Miss Mary Mack is a hand song that many people remember from school yards and play grounds. You can play the hand game with toddlers, using a progression that moves from the very simple to the more complicated game with a partner. The words are below with the final movements. The progression is after the song. It will take preschoolers a few years to progress to playing with a partner. The rhythm and hand play is very important to later academic skills. It’s also very exciting for you and the children to discover when they’re able to suddenly move to the next step. It’s a visual illustration of the development of their brains.

Full Version

Miss (*cross arms over chest.*)

Ma... (*Put both hands on thighs.*) ...ry (*Clap your hands.*)

Mack, (*Clap right hands together with your partner.*)

(*Clap your own hands.*)

Mack, (*Clap left hands together with your partner.*)

(*Clap your own hands.*)

Mack (*Clap right hands together with a partner.*)

(*Clap your own hands.*)

(*Repeat the clapping pattern for the rest of the lines.*)

All dressed in black, black, black

With silver buttons, buttons, buttons,

All down her back, back, back,

She asked her mother, mother, mother,

For fifty cents, cents, cents,

To see the elephant, elephant, elephant,

Climb up the fence, fence, fence,

He climbed so high, high, high,

He reached the sky, sky, sky,

And never came back, back, back,

Til the end of July, July, July.

Toddler Progression

1. Clap the rhythm of the song. (2 and 3 year olds)
2. Add the first three motions slowly and then clap the last three words. (3 and 4 year olds)
3. Replace the partner clapping with thigh clapping.

In order to be successful at stage three, children must have a more developed sense of rhythm and coordination. This takes a while for some. Play at their present level, remembering this is play and not a rush to the final step. When they’re comfortable with this, then you can show them how they can play with a partner

4. Clap with a partner but don’t cross hands.
5. You can now try the full version above. Once children know this version, you’ll find them creating ways to make it more demanding, by flipping their hands and adding other hand coordination challenges.

Hide and Seek

Toddlers love to play hide and seek and you won't be able to help laughing at their joy of finding you and being found. However, toddler hide and seek is not the same as school-age hide and seek. First, toddlers always need to see a little piece of you or they just forget about the game and go off and do something else. Second, they want you to hide in the same place time after time and then they'll use the same place over and over until they tire of the game. I once tried to change the hiding place and had a group of toddlers find me, walk me over to the old place and then laugh when they found me again. Just have fun and let the children determine how they want to play the game.



Wheels, Wheels, Wheels

Break out the riding toys. I can't think of a more enjoyable activity to help develop balance. Scooters, tricycles, bicycles with training wheels and wagons teach preschoolers to use their muscles in new ways. Stay away from skateboards and vehicles with motors. Skateboards are too challenging for preschoolers and motorized vehicles take the learning experience out of the play experience and increase the danger. Most of all remember **helmets. No child should be on a scooter or riding toy without one.**

Balls

Don't minimize the educational versatility of a simple rubber ball. They're inexpensive and will keep toddlers busy for hours. You should have a bag of balls in different sizes, making sure the smallest can't fit in anyone's mouth. The largest should be about half the height of the child. Larger balls are fun, but only when children are very sturdy on their feet. Couple balls with soft child safe plastic bats and hoops, and buckets for fill and dump play.

Use small foam balls for safe indoor play. You don't need to teach the children how to play with them. Just let them use their imagination. Buy a variety in different colors and sizes to encourage sorting activities. Light weight foam balls are also great for infants who can pick them up easily. Just make sure they don't teethe on them.

Note: Keep foam balls indoors and away from pets. They pick up debris outside and then pets take great pleasure in tearing them to pieces.

Bubbles

Preschoolers love to chase and pop bubbles. You can buy wands to make singular bubbles or many smaller bubbles. You can also get large rings to make giant bubbles, a toddler favorite. Even the most sedentary child can't help chasing a giant bubble across the park.



You Asked?

Send your questions to
FCCservices@programsforparents.org and
we may answer them in the newsletter.

Are there grants available to start a Family Child Care Home or to improve an existing program?

The bad news is that there is virtually no grant money available for family child care. Most grant money goes towards large centers and non-profit programs. The good news is that you can get small business loans to either start a program or upgrade your existing program. The following web-site, www.nccic.acf.hhs.gov, has information available for microloans, business loans that are less than \$25,000. Go to the site, then navigate to "popular topics" and then to "Resources for Childcare Providers/Business Owners Tip 3: Microloans."

However, you don't need \$25,000 to start a good family child care program. You can probably start with \$1000.00 or less by beginning with two infants. The only large items of equipment you'll need are portable cribs, a good double stroller, a safe changing area and child seats for feeding. The equipment needs to meet child safety standards and be clean and safe, but not necessarily new. You'll need a couple of hundred dollars for miscellaneous toys, bottles, cups and bedding, all things you may be able to get used from friends or family.

When you know you like what you're doing and can provide good care, you can think about expanding. You'll need to write a simple business plan, which states how much gross income you currently bring in, how much it costs to run the business and how much you can pay back on the requested loan each month. You should know these figures if you've been operating with a small number of children for a few months. If you have good credit, existing clients, a registered child care home and a good clear plan, your bank should be open to talking to you. Check the above web-site for tips on applying for small loans.

My best advice is to get through the first couple of months and then put money aside each month to enhance your equipment and grow your program as the children grow so you can avoid a loan. The longer you're in business successfully, the more likely it is that you can acquire a loan for larger needs, such as remodeling new space or purchasing an outdoor jungle gym. Slower growth allows you to carefully develop your program without the burden of borrowed money. Your reputation as a good dependable provider who loves the children she works with will attract families to you, even if you don't have upscale equipment.

Education and Conferences

NJAEYC Conference

Health in Child Care Conference

May 30th, 2007

Doubletree Hotel, Somerset NJ

Go to: www.njaeyc.org for updated information

WARMLINE

Providing you with practical, accurate information on health, behavior issues and regulatory information relating to the children in your care.

1-800-713-9006



Directory

Montclair Office
973-744-4050

Newark Office
973-297-1114



Childcare Matters

May 2007

Newsletter 102

Writer/Editor

Elizabeth A. Allen

Copy Editor

Simona Bana
Susan Boyle

Page Layout

Elizabeth A. Allen

Distribution

Simona Bana
Family Child Care
Department

Published by

Programs for Parents
Barbara Fedoroff, CEO
20 Church Street
Montclair NJ 07042
973-744-4050

Childcare Matters (copyright pending) is a monthly newsletter published for Registered Family Child Care Providers and parents using their services.