

Whoosh

Welcome to our December newsletter!

Nearing the end of the year already, although I must admit we are all looking forward to hopefully a long summer and relaxing times with family and friends. We need to recharge our batteries so that we come back refreshed for another busy year next year.

Thanks to all our volunteers, members, committee and friends for your ongoing support throughout the year.

As always, we really appreciate your contribution to our society.

Take care all of you!

Belinda, Chris, Jacqui, Jack, Marilyn, Mary, Moira & Rynne

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**MERRY CHRISTMAS
HAPPY NEW YEAR 2010**



Asthma Canterbury will be closed from mid-day Thursday, 24 December and will reopen at 8:30AM on Tuesday, 5 January 2010.



www.asthmacanty.org.nz

Visit us on our website for up to date information on allergy bedding products, our up and coming activities, and much more!

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Festive Season Checklist

Order the ham, dust off the Christmas decorations, send the cards, start the shopping...

The end of the year is approaching fast and with all the other activities at this time of the year, attending to health needs sometimes gets forgotten.

Here's a quick checklist to keep in mind:

- **Have I got enough medication to see me through the holiday period?**
- **Will my usual doctor be available over the Christmas period?** If not or if you are going away yourself, make sure your Management Plan is up to date as it will help with the continuity of care if you need to see an unfamiliar medical practitioner.
- **Will I be exposed to asthma triggers while away on holiday?** Consider different climatic conditions, dust and pollen from summer haymaking, dust mites in holiday accommodation, exercise.

Plan for the possibility of striking some of your triggers whilst on holiday. If you use dust mite protective bedding at home, take it with you. Make sure you have your reliever inhaler on hand when you are out and about and don't forget to keep taking your regular preventer dose. If traveling overseas, read the 'H1N1 Update' in this newsletter.

Have a healthy and relaxing holiday season.



Will we see these in New Zealand?

London has just opened its first Salt Cave Clinic for the treatment of asthma, allergies and other respiratory illnesses. Salt Cave therapy originated in Eastern Europe when miners reported a significant improvement in their respiratory health following the mining of salt blocks some 300 metres below ground.

The chambers are created to mimic naturally occurring salt caves. People sit in comfortable chairs and breathe normally, allowing the tiny negative ionized particles to enter and soothe the airways. Clinical studies have shown that inflammation is reduced, airways widened and mucous able to be mobilized normally.

During an initial course of treatment, a person spends an hour in the Salt Cave, twice a week for 7 weeks. After that time, treatment is done as a preventative.



While studies indicate that salt therapy is effective, scientists suggest that this may be due to the placebo effect. This interesting method of treatment is also very expensive and not widely available. A lot of information is on the internet for those who are interested.

H1N1 'Swine Flu' Update

Currently rates of H1N1 influenza in New Zealand are quite low as we move out of the winter and the typical 'flu season. Unfortunately the opposite is the case in the Northern Hemisphere as the colder weather takes hold there. Reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States indicate higher numbers than usual seeking treatment for influenza or pneumonia.

'The World Health Organization's (WHO) latest update states that Mexico has reported more confirmed cases of pandemic influenza since September, than during the springtime epidemic. In Europe, high rates of influenza illness have been observed in Iceland, Ireland, the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands and Ukraine. Many other countries in Europe and Western and Central Asia are showing evidence of early influenza transmission including Spain, Austria, parts of Northern Europe, Russia and Turkey. In Japan, influenza activity has increased sharply - this is around ten weeks ahead of the usual winter influenza season.'

(Sourced from Ministry of Health website 4 November 2009)

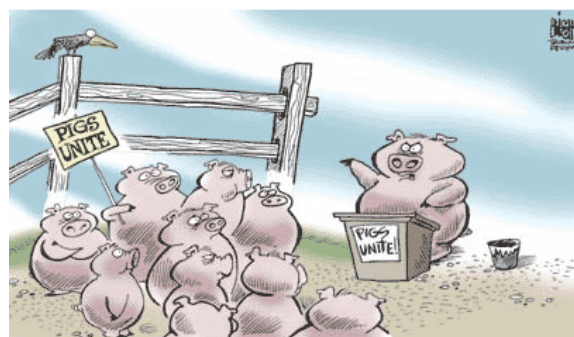
Further information is available on the WHO's website:

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/updates/en/>

What does this mean for people in NZ with respiratory problems?

- Be prepared – 'Swine flu' is out of the headlines at the moment but it will be back. Keep on top of your condition as much as possible by using your medications as prescribed and making sure you don't run out. Have a check up with your GP and review your management plan especially if it hasn't been looked at for 12 months.

- Prepare carefully for travel – get advice on the incidence of H1N1 if traveling overseas. Find out what assistance is available if you become unwell. Take a kit with masks, hand sanitiser, extra medication and a copy of your management plan. Before travelling, talk with your GP about the need for additional medications such as Tamiflu or antibiotics in case of illness. Get travel insurance that covers you for medical assistance.
- Keep vigilant about hygiene – wash and dry hands well, cover coughs and sneezes and keep cold symptoms at home.
- The 'flu vaccine for 2010 will contain the vaccine for the H1N1 pandemic strain as well as the expected seasonal influenza strains. As has been the case previously, the vaccine will be available free to anyone over 65 years and people with chronic illness which includes respiratory conditions such as asthma and COPD. The Ministry of Health has extended the free availability of vaccine to include pregnant women, people who are morbidly obese and children between 6 months and 4 years who are enrolled in particular high deprivation General Practices.



THE TURKEYS HAVE BIRD FLU. THE COWS HAVE MAD COW DISEASE. I'M TELLING YOU, BOYS... UNLESS WE WANT TO SEE MORE HAM SERVED ON THANKSGIVING, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GET OUR OWN DISEASE!

What is the correct way to breathe?

Slow deep breaths through your nose with the right pattern can help stop Exercise Induced Asthma. Read the information below for tips on how to breathe easy.

Four steps to good breathing:

- breathe through your nose
- be a belly-breather
- relax to let air flow out slowly
- pause after you breathe out.

Breathe through your nose

Nose breathing is easier said than done if you aren't used to it or if you have a blocked nose. It takes practice.

Do your diaphragmatic breathing

Your diaphragm is a large muscle separating your lungs from your abdomen. It can work away forever and never get tired. If you use your chest muscles instead of your diaphragm, you feel tired and tense. Using your diaphragm well soon becomes automatic, but you have to break old patterns of breathing first. This takes a little attention and practice.

- sit in an upright chair — sit tall but stay relaxed
- rest one hand on your chest and the other on your belly
- breathe in gently but fully through your nose
- as you breathe in, pay attention to the movement of your hands

- if you are using mainly your diaphragm to breathe, the hand on your belly will be pushed forwards slightly as your belly expands
- if you are using mainly your chest muscles to breathe, the hand on your chest will be pushed upwards and outwards as your chest expands
- practice both ways of breathing and feel the difference now you have felt the benefits of belly-breathing. Practice for a few moments several times a day. Soon belly-breathing will be automatic.

Relax to let the air flow out

Forcing air out makes it harder for the air to flow freely. It's important to just relax and let the air flow out slowly.

- sit upright and relaxed
- don't forget to breathe through your nose
- belly breathe in gently and fully
- then just let go
- feel the air flow out fully and effortlessly.

Breathe in a rhythmic pattern

When you are tense or anxious you tend to breathe faster. This usually means you take shorter, shallower breaths. This way of breathing is both inefficient and tiring.



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International Older Persons Day

October the first was International Older Persons day and to celebrate an enormous health, safety and wellbeing expo was held at the Christchurch Convention Centre. Asthma Canterbury had a stand providing general information about COPD and asthma and the services we offer. With over 1200 attendees we were kept busy throughout the day with a steady stream of visitors. It was a great day with over 50 exhibitors so something for everyone. We attend many different expos throughout the year so if you do see us out and about, come and talk to us, we'd love to meet you.



Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Pulmonary Rehabilitation is an eight week course for those with permanent breathlessness due to a long term chest

condition. Pulmonary Rehab has been shown to be effective in reducing breathlessness, improving exercise tolerance and quality of life.

Christchurch has been fortunate to have a Pulmonary Rehab programme offered through the hospital. Many people in NZ do not have access to such programmes. 2009 however saw the first Pulmonary Rehab programmes offered in the community by the 'Canterbury Initiative' and more are planned for 2010. The first of these begins in late January and will be held in the Aranui area. Programmes have recently finished in Rangiora and there are plans to deliver a programme in the Hornby area.

The programmes consist of a two hour session twice per week, for eight weeks. Each session consists of an hour of exercise and an hour of education. The education sessions are delivered by experts in each area, and cover subjects such as medication, nutrition, control of breathlessness, oxygen therapy and more. The exercises are led by a physiotherapist and develop strength, flexibility and stamina. Both the hospital and the community delivered programmes run to a similar format but the benefit is there are now more programmes offered and there may be one in your area. Patients are also encouraged to continue exercise after the programme is completed, to maximize the benefits of rehab and join a support group for people who suffer from breathlessness (e.g. Respiratory Relief in Christchurch and the Keep Breathing Group in Rangiora).

Pulmonary Rehab programmes are designed to equip people with the

knowledge and skills needed to manage their health. They are a fantastic opportunity to gain skills and fitness in a supportive and safe environment. If you are interested in participating discuss with your Doctor or Practice Nurse who can make a referral if appropriate. Or alternatively give one of our educators a ring for more information.

Update on Spacers:

For all those who have found the large volume spacer cumbersome to carry around when away from home – good news! The small volume spacers that were funded for the under 6's are now fully funded for everyone. The use and cleaning of these spacers is the same as for the large volume spacers. Small volume and large volume spacers are available from your GP.



The Society passes on its condolences to the families of members and friends who have recently lost loved ones. Our thoughts also go to any members unwell at this time.

Details about us...

Contact Details:

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www.asthmacanty.org.nz

Office hours:

8:30am - 4pm, Monday to Friday – As we are often in a consultation or out of the office it is a good idea to give us a ring before coming in to see us.

Staff members:

Moira Green	Respiratory Educator
Jacqui Morriss	Respiratory Educator
Belinda O'Rourke	Respiratory Educator
Chris Summerfield	Manager
Mary Wells	Nebuliser Coordinator
Jack Welsh	Volunteer
Marilyn Bryce	Volunteer
Ryanne Firme	Volunteer

HOW WE CAN HELP YOU:

The society can help in the following ways:

We Sell:

- Allergy Bedding covers
- Nebulisers
- Nebuliser filters & giving sets

We Hire:

- Nebulisers (for short term hire only)

We Provide:

- Education sessions for individuals, community and professional groups including schools
- Pre-school Baxter Bear programme
- Smoking cessation and nicotine replacement therapy.