

Northside Allergy Associates

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Back to School with Allergies

It has been found that asthma and allergies account for more than 16 million missed school days per year in the United States (1). A recent report also suggests that asthma within the educational services industry is an occupational health problem, particularly among teachers and teacher's aids (1). As providers, we often stress the importance of managing allergens in the home environment; however, it is also important that we direct attention to non-residential environments, such as schools and daycare facilities, as important

sources of allergen exposure.

Improvements in our schools and daycare facilities might be needed to decrease indoor allergen levels. Some examples of improvements include: reductions in potential dust reservoirs, regular and thorough cleaning and maintenance, pest control, improvements in ventilation systems, control of excess moisture, and methods to reduce allergen load on clothing of individuals with pets (2).

Allergen levels can vary by time, location, and type of

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Back to School with Allergies (continued)

room within the building.

Children and teachers spend a large portion of each week in schools and daycare facilities, which can be important sites of indoor allergen exposure. Common sources of indoor allergens include: carpeting, upholstered furniture, pillows, stuffed animals, toys, and the clothing of individuals with pet exposure, class pets (2). Exposure to allergens can occur directly or indirectly. For example, clothing would be the primary transfer mechanism and source of exposure for pet allergens (1). Clothing is also a source of dust mite exposure.

For those individuals allergic to dogs and cats, schools and daycares can be important sites of exposure, particularly for those that do not have pets at home (1). A study of the prevalence of cat allergen in Kansas City Schools found that cat allergen is present throughout schools. These findings reinforced the need to identify and/or treat cat allergy in children, even in those with no cat exposure at home (3).

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3. Arnold D., Gard L., Pacheco E, Barnes C., Portnoy J. (Feb 2010). *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*. Prevalence of cat allergen in Kansas city schools. 125(2), AB211. Retrieved September 7, 2011 from <http://www.jacionline.org/>

Tips for College Bound Students

If they aren't already doing so, now is the time for teens to begin to take responsibility for managing their conditions. Here are some timely tips for the college bound:

- When you arrive on campus, meet with staff (especially food service personnel and residence hall advisors) to develop a plan to control your allergies and asthma.
- Don't take chances. Know what triggers your allergic disease and stay away from these allergens. Be aware of signs that you need to seek medical attention.
- Keep prescriptions filled and up-to-date. Always have your medications on hand, including your autoinjectable epinephrine and quick-relief inhaler.
- Consider talking to your friends and roommates about your allergies and asthma. Letting those close to you know about your health, and the signs of a medical emergency, can help you stay safe.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Twenty-two percent of college students have allergies, according to the American College Health Association.
- A recent study of college students with food allergies found that only 3.5% had informed campus dining services of their allergies.

An excerpt from: American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology. (February 2011). Off to college with allergies and asthma. Retrieved September 7, 2011, from <http://www.aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/allergies.aspx>



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