The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) have written a series of leaflets to help children, young people and their families cope with allergic conditions. This patient leaflet has been developed to help children, young people and their families to cope with having asthma with allergic triggers.

If you find there are lots of terms on this leaflet that you don’t understand, you can download a copy of ‘Understanding the Language of Allergy’ from the RCPCH website www.rcpch.ac.uk/allergy.

### Non emergency care - at home, nursery, school, out and about, GP Clinic

There is a leaflet on dealing with asthma emergencies. People caring for the child need to:

- recognise when symptoms require treatment (e.g. cough, wheeze, breathlessness)
- follow the personal management plan, if the child has one
- give the child their rescue inhaler (blue or purple/red) if they have breathing problems
- take the child to the GP or nurse if they being to have more frequent or worse asthma or allergic rhinitis or if they seem to be caused by something different (e.g. a new food)
- always attend routine check-ups with health professionals
- understand that smoking near the child and viral colds can make asthma worse
- seek appropriate health care advice

The doctor or nurse should:

- recognise that the child has asthma, find out how severe it is and what might have made it worse?
- make sure the child is treated with a the right medication (e.g. inhaler devices)
- explain that keeping any rhinitis symptoms (itchy/runny eyes or nose) under control may help with asthma symptoms
- arrange an appointment at a specialist clinic (particularly if the child is young, needs allergy tests or has severe symptoms)

### Managing asthma and rhinitis – what the doctor / nurse / hospital should do

There is a leaflet on attending an allergy appointment. The doctor or nurse should take a medical history of the child (and their family). The doctor or nurse should also:

- check that the diagnosis of asthma and/or allergic rhinitis is still correct and see if anything has changed eg what the child is allergic to?
- explain the best way to protect the child from things that make the asthma worse e.g. avoiding exposure to tobacco smoke and certain foods, taking more care in the tree/grass pollen season, keeping away from certain animals, controlling house dust mites
- make sure that the child is able to take all medication they are given effectively
- change the medication – the dose or the way the child takes it as they grow older eg checking which is the best spacer and inhaler device, changing to tablets instead of syrup when the child can manage them
- talk to you (and the child) about when their condition worsens and how to recognise and handle severe symptoms – see asthma emergencies leaflet
Managing asthma and rhinitis – what the doctor / nurse / hospital should do cont...

- update or write a new personal management plan
- find out how well you and the child manage other allergies e.g. eczema, food allergy
- make sure that all the doctors and nurses treating the child have the correct up-to-date information. This should include notes to and from the GP and any emergency reports eg from paramedics.
- tell other doctors and nurses what they find out when they examine or do tests for your child. These might be skin prick tests or blood tests, as well as breathing tests through a hand-held tube (peak flow) or through a breath-measuring machine (spirometry).

If symptoms are more complex

A team of doctors and nurses from different departments may need to work together to help you. They should:

- keep reviewing the child’s condition and how you are all managing their asthma as well as related conditions eg allergic rhinitis, eczema, food allergy
- organise additional investigations eg look into the child’s nose or chest, take a biopsy sample, have a nurse to visit you at home to look at what in your home may be causing problems
- consider whether it may there are any ways of reducing exposure to triggers. (e.g. bed covers)

Care in the future

If the child’s asthma / allergic rhinitis continue as they get older, the regular care they get should include:

- helping the child to recognise, treat and manage symptoms that become more severe
- reviewing their personalised management plan, including updating medications
- looking for changes in the child’s symptoms as they grow up
- finding out whether there are any problems caused by using medication over a longer time
- looking for changes in what the child is allergic to – allergies outgrown and new allergies
- reviewing how the child and family cope with the asthma / allergic rhinitis, and particularly whether their symptoms affect their ability to join in activities or affect their progress at school
- arranging counselling help for the child / the family if appropriate
- contacting the nursery / school to see how your child is getting on and helping staff to provide everyday care for him / her
- supporting the child as they move onto secondary school and into adult healthcare
- working with the young person to support them to live independently

Where can you get further information?
Take a look at the RCPCH website: www.rcpch.ac.uk/allergy there are some resources here. These websites might also help:

- Asthma UK: www.asthma.org.uk
- Anaphylaxis Campaign: www.anaphylaxiscampaign.org