



MEDWAY ASTHMA SELF-HELP NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2021

WELCOME TO THE MASH NEWSLETTER

At last the summer seems to have arrived! And with it, no doubt, some people are experiencing problems with their breathing and their asthma control. MASH continues to support our residents and their families affected by asthma, so please don't hesitate to get in touch. Indeed, in this newsletter, we have more information on looking after your asthma in the summer and on exercise and asthma.

Our fantastic coordinator, Angela, and our equally fantastic specialist asthma nurse, Julie, are working hard to keep our services running. In fact, our trustees are beginning to think about how we might be able to begin moving outreaches and advice sessions back to the real world, while maintaining some of the benefits of the past year of working online. That will take a lot of careful thought and preparation. It will certainly be good to see all our volunteers again, when we can do that safely!

Finally, I'd like to thank our brilliant volunteer, Wendy, who set herself the challenge last year of raising £1,000 for MASH by Christmas through monthly quizzes. Wendy smashed her target and kept the quizzes going into this year. She will now enjoy a well-earned break, but we hope she will challenge us again soon. Thank you, Wendy!

Have a great summer!

Clive Johnson, Chair of MASH Trustees

BREATHE EASY THIS SUMMER

As I write this, we are enjoying some beautiful summer weather, hopefully this will continue as we approach the summer holidays. Whether, this year you are enjoying days out with family or managing to get away for a holiday, it is important to be summer ready in regards to your asthma.

1. Think prevention – even if you are feeling well, don't forget to keep your preventer inhaler routine going.

2. Asthma Action Plan – make sure you have an up-to-date Personalised Asthma Action Plan to hand. For children, share the plan with anyone who looks after your child.

3. Be asthma attack ready – make sure you always have a reliever inhaler (usually blue) with you, at all times, plus a spacer if used.

4. Be prepared for any known asthma triggers – such as: animals/weather/pollen/pollution. Hay fever is often a trigger, so treating hay fever symptoms can also help reduce the risk of an asthma attack.

Have a good summer!

Julie Millest, MASH's Asthma and Allergy Respiratory Specialist Nurse



EXERCISING WITH ASTHMA

One of the preventative steps a person with asthma can take to control their asthma is to avoid environments (e.g., high pollution and pollen) and activities that trigger their asthma. So why exercise if exercise is a trigger for the majority of individuals with asthma?

Exercise is one of the most effective treatments for patients with asthma. Exercise engagement is critical to management and treatment of asthma patients. Exercise programmes can take place in a variety of environments including a gym class, gym setting within local communities or home exercise programmes. Evidence suggests that when individuals with asthma engage in a regular exercise programme they will experience a reduction in respiratory symptoms, improved asthma control, reduction in use of emergency inhalers (e.g., salbutamol), reduction in hospitalisations due to asthma, improved lung health, improvement in fitness, improved mood and reductions in body fat.



It is clear that exercise is a powerful tool in the management of asthma. Below are 5 things to consider when exercising with asthma:

- 1. Ensure asthma is well controlled at rest.** This includes regularly using prevention inhaler therapy (e.g., inhaled corticosteroids) as prescribed by your GP.
- 2. Try to exercise in environments that are less likely to trigger asthma.** Avoid times when the environment is going to be high in pollution or pollen, or when it may be cold and dry. During these times, exercising indoors or wearing a mask to humidify the air may be beneficial.
- 3. Engaging in exercises can significantly improve asthma severity.** Exercise can reduce airway inflammation and improve breathing control so people with asthma experience less severe symptoms, less often, use less emergency therapy (e.g., salbutamol) and have fewer hospitalisations. Plus becoming fitter has more holistic benefits on health and well-being.
- 4. Many athletes have asthma.** In fact, 21% of the British Olympic Team have an asthma-related condition. Asthma occurs in around 30% (the prevalence) of sportsmen and women, such as professional footballers, and elite swimmers have been reported to have a prevalence of up to 70%. Bottom line is, you can have asthma and push your body to its limits as long as asthma is well managed.
- 5. Not all breathing symptoms experienced are down to asthma.** This is especially the case for people with well-controlled asthma and who have taken appropriate inhaler therapy prior to starting exercising. Symptoms such as difficulty to breathe in, tight chest when breathing in, wheezing breathing in and tight/stiff shoulders and back are all symptoms that may be related more to a disorder of the control of breathing patterns (dysfunctional breathing) or exercise-induced laryngeal (voice box) obstruction (EILO). It's possible to experience both asthma and dysfunctional breathing/EILO. Breathing pattern training, with support from respiratory physio/speech and language therapists, can be beneficial to help people improve breathing patterns. In addition, try to not to stress too much about breathing during exercise, relax the breathing into exercise rather than trying to breath harder because you are exercising. Remember a generally good sport technique (e.g., good running technique) promotes a good breathing pattern.

Professor John Dickinson, MASH Vice-chair of Trustees

SUPPORTED BY: MASH is very grateful to have been supported by many amazing grant-making organisations during this very tough time, including:



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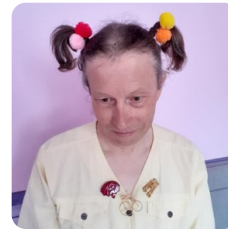


A HAIR-RAISING PERSONAL CHALLENGE FOR MASH'S 25TH



Those of you who follow MASH on social media could not have missed the fundraising efforts of our chair of trustees, Clive Johnson, over the last three weeks. Like many of us in the lockdowns over the last year, Clive's hair has grown significantly. However, when things did allow for some reopening, Clive didn't rush to the hairdressers for a trim like the rest of us. Instead, he decided he would challenge himself to 25 different hairstyles over 25 days before the big post-lockdown trim, all to celebrate MASH's 25th birthday and raise funds to help MASH continue to support people and families affected by asthma in Medway.

We think Clive has done an amazing job and would like to thank everyone who has supported him and his fundraising efforts. You can see all 25 hairstyles on our social media and our website: www.medwayasthmaselfhelp.co.uk/25th-birthday-2021/. If you would like to donate to Clive's fundraising challenge, you can do so here: uk.virginmoneygiving.com/CliveJohnson8.



THANK YOU, WENDY!

Another amazing fundraiser for MASH is Wendy, who has been running online quiz nights for MASH since last summer. Wendy's original fundraising target was £1,000 by Christmas, which she smashed. Due to high demand for the quiz nights, she continued to run the quiz nights until she returned to work following the last lockdown. Wendy ran her last quiz, for now, in May, and in total raised £1,596 inc. gift aid. Congratulations, Wendy, that is a fantastic achievement. Thank you for all your support of MASH's work.



**MEDWAY ASTHMA SELF-HELP'S
ONLINE
QUIZ
NIGHT**

**Saturday 26th June,
7pm, via Zoom**

Suggested donation: £5

To book, please email
medwayasthmaselfhelp@btconnect.com or send a
message via our website:
www.medwayasthmaselfhelp.co.uk/contact-us/





Free telephone appointments with an asthma nurse

– asthma advice and support, annual reviews, personalised asthma action plans and more.



KEEP IN TOUCH...

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**Are you using your reliever
inhaler (usually blue) three
or more times a week?**

It's a sign that your
asthma is not under
control – you should
book an asthma
review.



The MASH newsletter is put together and edited by Angela Stokes, MASH Coordinator

MASH'S KIDS CORNER

If you need support with your child's asthma, then MASH can help. Get in touch to book an appointment with our asthma nurse.



We would love to see your inhaler designs. Would you make it summery and colourful? Why not send us a picture of your fantastic efforts and tell us all about how you are looking after your asthma. You can download our asthma comic here: <https://tinyurl.com/kx7e9y32>. Enjoy!