



MEDWAY ASTHMA SELF-HELP NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2021

WELCOME TO THE MASH NEWSLETTER

As the country moves further into relaxing the pandemic restrictions, we hope you all feel confident about keeping safe. The NHS, supported by volunteers, has done a fantastic job in vaccinating many of us. Some will, understandably, still feel anxious, especially those who are living with asthma. MASH is here to help people with asthma and their families. Our weekly advice sessions, with Julie, our specialist asthma nurse, have been running throughout the pandemic and we are starting to plan for a return to face-to-face sessions. Also, we have started to run our outreach sessions again, starting with the Place of Welcome at St Augustine's Church and the Mason Mile. We have planned very carefully to make sure everyone is as safe as they can be. For instance, we will continue to wear masks in keeping with the guidance for those visiting health services. If you feel you can help us by volunteering to support these events, or in other ways, please let us know. We are keen to recruit some more volunteers!

Clive Johnson, Chair of MASH Trustees



Maggie, MASH trustee, at the Mason Mile's Summer Extravaganza, Great Lines Park, Gillingham. All of our trustees are volunteers.

SEPTEMBER ASTHMA SPIKE



Each September there is a sharp peak in asthma-related hospital admissions across the country (and in other countries too), known as the September/Week 38 Asthma Spike. This spike is thought to occur for several reasons:

- Children/young people returning to school having been out of all routines over the summer (including not taking their preventative medication/inhaler which makes them more vulnerable to asthma attacks).
- The weather changing as autumn begins and this is a trigger for many people with asthma.
- Children/young people being exposed to several new bugs/viruses.
- Seasonal allergies such as mould spores in the dropping leaves, and allergies to dust mites now that you are spending more time indoors.

So what can you do to avoid the September asthma spike? Keep up with your daily asthma routine and taking your preventer inhaler (usually brown) each day as prescribed, even when you feel well. Ensure that your annual asthma review is up to date and that you have a personalised asthma action plan (learn more about this on the next page). Finally, if your child is returning to school/nursery, the following simple measures can ensure that the staff caring for your child/young person have everything they need to look after your child's asthma:

1.

Ensure your child/young person has an annual asthma review

2.

Take an in-date and full emergency reliever inhaler (and spacer) to the school

3.

Give the school an up-to-date copy of your child/young person's personalised asthma action plan

4.

Ensure that the school are aware of any known asthma triggers for your child/young person

PERSONALISED ASTHMA ACTION PLANS (PAAPS)

You will often hear/read about the importance of having a personalised asthma action plan (and an up-to-date one!), but do you know what it is? Do you have one? Do you know where it is? Is it up to date/less than 12 months old?

A personalised asthma action plan (PAAP) provides personalised information on the medication you are taking and when, and guidance on what to do when your asthma is getting worse. Using a PAAP means that people with asthma are four times less likely to need hospital care for their asthma (Source: Asthma UK).

But they are only useful if you know where it is and/or if anyone looking after you/your child can access it. Pin a copy to the fridge. Keep a photo of it on your phone. Ensure that your child's school/nursery has a copy so that they can look after your child when you are not there. What about the leaders at the clubs they go to? And have you considered yourself at work too? Who would look after you if you became unwell at work – do they need a copy?



PAAP forms can be downloaded from the Asthma UK website (<https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/manage-your-asthma/action-plan/>). Take one with you when you next see your asthma nurse and ask them to help you fill it in.

THE PREVENTER – THE MOST IMPORTANT INHALER



When you think about asthma inhalers, you will most likely picture a blue inhaler. You may even think that because it is the emergency/reliever inhaler that it is the most important inhaler. But it is not. The most important inhaler is the preventer inhaler (usually brown, but can also be pink, red and orange etc) and you should be taking it **every day**, even when you feel well.

Preventer inhalers are the main way to treat asthma. They contain a mild steroid that keeps the inflammation and swelling in your airways down. However, it takes time to build up the protection that the preventer inhaler gives you, as much as 2–3 weeks. Therefore, it is really important to take it every day, as prescribed, even when you are feeling well. It means that you are less likely to

react to your asthma triggers, and that you will not need to use your reliever inhaler so often, if at all.

You can read more about the importance of preventer inhalers on the Asthma UK website: <https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhalers-medicines-treatments/inhalers-and-spacers/preventer/>. You can also read more in our children's asthma comic, in which Deano (our dinosaur mascot) and his friends explain all about what asthma is and how asthma inhalers work. Get a copy of our comic when you see us at outreach or download a copy for our website here: https://www.medwayasthmaelfhelp.co.uk/app/download/5816071386/MASH+Deano%27s+Asthma+Comic_Dec+2020.pdf.



TAKE ON THE MASH25 CHALLENGE

As many of you will know, this year MASH is celebrating its 25th birthday – that's 25 years of providing asthma support and raising asthma awareness in Medway. What an achievement!

Back in June, our chair of trustees, Clive did a hair-raising challenge of 25 different hairstyles in 25 days to raise funds for MASH. Now, we would like you to take on the MASH25 challenge and help MASH to continue making a difference by supporting people and families affected by asthma in Medway.

Pick a challenge – it can be anything you would like, and you could even make it 25 themed! Something you love and enjoy, something you have never done before, or something you have always wanted to do. You could walk, run, jog, cycle, swim, jump, scoot, knit, read, sing, bake, litter pick or more. Something to improve your health or to help others. You could do 25 good deeds – for example, promise to load the dishwasher or do the hoovering for 25 days.

Tell us all about your challenge when you register and make a £25 donation, and then when you send us proof of completing your challenge, we will send you a MASH25 challenge medal. We can even help you set up sponsorship pages if you would like to fundraise for MASH during your challenge.

You can find out more about the MASH25 virtual challenge (and see all of Clive's hair-raising hairstyles) on our website: <https://www.medwayasthmahelp.co.uk/25th-birthday-2021/>



The pictures above show the MASH25 virtual medal on the left, and Clive (MASH's chair of trustees) with his well-deserved medal on the right.

WHAT DOES MASH DO TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH ASTHMA?



MASH supports people and families affected by asthma in Medway. We aim to improve awareness and understanding of asthma, its triggers and treatment, and to empower people with asthma to self-manage their condition. **All of our services are free and open to all.**

Our asthma nurse can provide advice and support with asthma – discuss medications, asthma reviews and personalised asthma action plans. Letters containing the advice given and any recommendations are given to clients to forward to their GPs. When face-to-face appointments are able to safely resume, we will again be able to offer spirometry and FeNO testing for asthma diagnoses and monitoring, and airborne allergy testing.

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



KEEP IN TOUCH...

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

MASH'S KIDS CORNER

This August, MASH has taken over Medway's Waghorn Sez Creative Challenge page and group on Facebook, with 25 days of creative challenges to celebrate our 25th birthday. To see all of the challenges, check out the page here: <https://www.facebook.com/Waghornsays>. We would love to see what you have created – and its not just for the kids! Why not try out some of the suggestions below:



#MASH25 WAGHORN CHALLENGE – DAY 1

PLAYING WIND/BRASS INSTRUMENTS REDUCES STRESS AND MAY ALSO HELP YOUR BREATHING/ASTHMA. SO FOR OUR FIRST CHALLENGE, MAKE A WIND INSTRUMENT WITH ITEMS AROUND THE HOUSE.

SEND US A PICTURE OF YOUR INSTRUMENT AND/OR A VIDEO OF YOUR MUSIC.



#MASH25 WAGHORN CHALLENGE – DAY 2

THE SUN IS OUT AND THE AIR POLLUTION LEVELS ARE LOW ACROSS KENT & MEDWAY TODAY. GO FOR A WALK AND TAKE A PHOTO OF SOMETHING THAT INSPIRES YOU TO BE OUT IN THE FRESH AIR AND EXERCISING.

WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT INSPIRES YOU.



#MASH25 WAGHORN CHALLENGE – DAY 3

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE SPORT? HAVE YOU BEEN INSPIRED BY THE OLYMPICS?

DRAW A PICTURE OF DEANO, OUR MASCOT DINOSAUR, AS YOUR FAVOURITE SPORTS STAR, OR PLAYING YOUR FAVOURITE SPORT.



#MASH25 WAGHORN CHALLENGE – DAY 5

YOU BREATHE 17,000 TIMES A DAY ON AVERAGE!

CREATE A PICTURE USING YOUR BREATH – WHAT WILL YOU DO?

HINT – ONE IDEA YOU COULD TRY ARE SOME INKS OR WATERED-DOWN PAINT AND BLOW THEM AROUND WITH A STRAW.



#MASH25 WAGHORN CHALLENGE – DAY 12

LET'S BUST OUT OUR POETRY SKILLS TODAY. CAN YOU WRITE AN ACROSTIC POEM ABOUT ASTHMA OR BREATHING?

AN ACROSTIC POEM IS WHERE THE FIRST LETTER OF EACH LINE SPELLS OUT A WORD & THE SUBJECT OF THE POEM.



#MASH25 WAGHORN CHALLENGE – DAY 13

SOME MORE EXERCISE FOR OUR LUNGS TODAY WITH SOME BUBBLES.

SHOW US A PICTURE OF THE BIGGEST BUBBLE YOU CAN BLOW.

CAN YOU BLOW ANY ODD/INTERESTING SHAPED BUBBLES?

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