



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Lisa Slater
(309) 888-5489 (office)
(309) 838-1599 (cell)

World Asthma Day Is May 5, 2015
May is Asthma Awareness Month

BLOOMINGTON, IL- To raise awareness about the health consequences and personal and financial costs of asthma, the McLean County Health Department is participating in World Asthma Day on May 5, 2015, and Asthma Awareness Month throughout May. The health department joins the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) in encouraging people with asthma to learn more about how to control asthma and prevent asthma episodes. The theme of this year's World Asthma Day is "You Can Control Your Asthma."

As a resource for parents and guardians of school-aged children, an *Asthma Action Plan*, developed by the Illinois Department of Public Health, is available on the health department's website: <http://bit.ly/1ExvLFJ>. All children diagnosed with asthma are encouraged to have an action plan in place that describes the steps to take if they begin to experience any symptoms. Asthma Action Plans are typically developed together with the child's health care provider and give specific information about asthma triggers and management needs and should be readily available to school staff, coaches, child care providers and others who are in regular contact with the child.

Nearly 26 million people living in the United States have asthma, a chronic lifelong disease that affects the lungs. Asthma can cause wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and coughing. Although asthma cannot be cured, it is possible to manage asthma to reduce and prevent asthma attacks, also called episodes. In the United States, approximately half of people with asthma had at least one asthma attack in 2012. More children (55%) than adults (49%) had an attack.

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People with asthma can prevent asthma attacks if they learn how to avoid asthma triggers like tobacco smoke, mold, outdoor air pollution, and colds and flu. Asthma episodes can also be prevented by using inhaled corticosteroids and other prescribed daily long-term control medicines correctly.

Asthma attacks cause adults to miss work and children to miss school. These dangerous and sometimes life-threatening episodes reduce the quality of life for people with asthma. The good news is that we can raise awareness about asthma and how it can be controlled.

The McLean County Health Department works with the Regional Office of Education (ROE) and local school districts, to train coaches and school staff about how to address asthma issues among their athletes and students. The trainings help staff learn how to be proactive about dealing with asthma episodes. Topics include addressing information on assessment and monitoring, control of environmental factors, pharmacologic management, and asthma education. For information about asthma resources or the McLean County Asthma Coalition, contact the health department at (309) 888-5954.

For general information about asthma control and management, visit CDC at www.cdc.gov/asthma. To learn how to raise awareness about asthma, visit GINA at www.ginasthma.org and use CDC's Online Asthma Awareness Toolkit (http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/world_asthma_day.htm). For air quality information, visit EPA AirNow at www.enviroflash.info.

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