

A B C D E F G Children's Health

Asthma Is Not Child's Play

(NAPSA)—Here's news that will help you breathe easier—doctors and insurers are working to help protect children. More than 24 million Americans are currently afflicted with asthma and children under the age of 18 are the fastest growing segment of this population. Asthma has more than doubled in the past two decades, and more than six million children are currently affected, making asthma the most prevalent chronic illness among children, according to the American Lung Association.

Asthma's effects on children's health are staggering. Each year it causes 14 million missed school days, nearly 658,000 emergency room visits annually and, in rare cases, even death.

"Parents should always consult their child's pediatrician for proper care and medications that can help treat the disease," says Dr. Gwen O'Keefe, Director of Medical Policy and Programs at Medco Health Solutions, Inc. Medco Health is a prescription benefit manager that offers a health management program called "Positive Approaches", which is designed to help people learn how to control their asthma. "But, there are additional steps parents and their children can take to control symptoms that may help lead to a healthy and more active lifestyle."

These include:

- **Formulate a written asthma action plan with your pediatrician.** Teach your child how to react to symptoms of an attack to help prevent serious consequences and have your child keep this written plan available to them at all times. Include your



An asthma action plan can save a child's life.

child's emergency contacts and list their medication regimen.

- **Know what triggers your child's asthma.** Triggers vary from person to person and can include pollen, dust, tobacco smoke, exercise, cold air, or even the common cold. For example, if exercise triggers your child's asthma, your pediatrician might recommend preventative medication a few minutes before athletic participation to control attacks.

- **Use the buddy system.** Whether at school or play, it's a good idea for your child to have a "buddy" who can call for help if he or she has an asthma attack. The "buddy" can be anyone trained to know the signs of an attack.

- **Consult your pediatrician about using a peak flow meter.** A peak flow meter determines a person's normal breathing patterns to help detect attacks before they occur.

For more information about asthma and other respiratory conditions, consumers can visit the health and wellness section of www.medcohealth.com.