

Support for people with asthma helps life

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

This is the final in a series of articles for a community program to raise awareness about asthma and the Asthma Toolkits program. The program is being done by the High Plains Research Network.

Over 12,000 people in eastern Colorado have asthma. Asthma attacks are caused by swelling of the airways in the lungs, which leave people struggling to get their breath. That adds up to a lot of time feeling sick, missed work and school, and money for emergency room visits. Many people with asthma have feelings of anxiety and sadness. Children with asthma may have trouble keeping up in school and may be left out of activities when they are not feeling well.

With the right support, life can be normal for people with asthma. A new program called Asthma Toolkits provides this support. The Family Practice of Holyoke has Asthma Toolkits, along with most clinics in eastern Colorado. Melissa Mayden, the Clinic Director, says the program has helped.

“We can provide better treatment for our asthma patients. We have a guideline to use now, and there is increased patient understanding thanks to all the materials in the toolkits.”

The Asthma Toolkits program includes training and equipment for doctors to better diagnose and treat asthma, including spirometry. Spirometry measures lung function. Mayden reports the clinic in Holyoke does at least five spirometry tests a month to help diagnose and monitor patients' asthma.

The Toolkit program also includes a free “toolkit” for patients, with helpful information on asthma, a peak flow meter for measuring breathing at home, and symptoms diaries. Providers can also give patients asthma action plans. Judy Sudmeier, FNP, now gives at least 50 percent of her patients with asthma “action plans” to help them manage their asthma better at home.

The final part to this program is a special automated telephone outreach service that calls people with asthma, or their parents. The call checks on asthma symptoms and provides helpful suggestions for patients and parents. It can help direct people to additional free telephone services, including nurses who can answer questions about asthma.

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If you have asthma or asthma symptoms, be sure to ask your doctor about any asthma symptoms and ask for your free asthma toolkit. This program has been funded by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.