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**RESPIRATORY
HEALTH
ASSOCIATIONSM**
of Metropolitan Chicago

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New “green” asthma inhalers on the way

Pencils, rulers and notebooks top most back to school lists but many Chicago children must also include asthma inhalers in their backpacks. Chicago is at the epicenter of the asthma epidemic and thousands of students rely on rescue inhalers when they have trouble breathing.

Now asthma inhalers are going green. By the end of 2008, CFC (chlorofluorocarbon) inhalers will be replaced with new environmentally friendly HFA (hydrofluoroalkane) inhalers. Unfortunately these inhalers work differently and many children carrying them will not have been properly trained in how to use them, thus increasing their risk for asthma emergencies

“While HFA inhalers contain the same medications, they need different care and if not used and prepped properly a child may not get a proper dose of their medication.” said Maureen Damitz, Senior Director of Asthma Programs at Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago (RHAMC). “Parents, teachers and all childcare providers need to be aware of the differences.”

HFA inhalers require priming before use to build up enough pressure to deliver the medication. Some HFA inhalers may require as many as four priming sprays. These inhalers also need careful cleaning with warm water weekly to make sure the nozzle doesn’t become clogged.

“HFA inhalers deliver a softer mist and have a smaller particle size which allows deeper penetration into the airways, giving people better asthma relief. All people with asthma – especially children – need to learn how to use these inhalers,” said Damitz.

Most pharmacies now carry HFA inhalers but during this transition CFC inhalers are still available. Respiratory Health Association recommends all people with asthma verify proper inhaler use with their health care provider.

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