Lifewire: Study looks at asthma and absenteeism

by Ven_Griva

It turns out that for people with asthma, being absent from work and school is a control issue. Those people with asthma who work to control their ailment are more likely to have better attendance at work or school than those whose symptoms are not well managed.

Those are the findings of a study presented Oct. 23 in Chicago at the annual meeting of the American College of Chest Physicians. The study surveyed by telephone more than 13,000 people with asthma from across the United States.

When researchers compared study participants with well-controlled asthma to those who were experiencing asthma symptoms, they found that children with uncontrolled asthma missed 145 percent more school days on average. Adults with poorly controlled asthma symptoms missed 208 percent more workdays.

Children with uncontrolled asthma missed more than six school days in a six-month period compared to just 2.6 missed school days for their healthier peers, the study found. Adults with poorly managed asthma missed almost five days of work versus an average of 1.5 days for their counterparts with well-managed asthma.

"I wasn't surprised to see there was a difference in absenteeism, but I was a little surprised at the magnitude of the difference," said the study's lead author, Dr. David Tinkelman, a professor of pediatrics and vice president for health initiatives at National Jewish Medical and Research Center in Denver.

Asthma is one of the few chronic diseases where you can sometimes miss your medications without suffering immediate ill effects, Tinkelman said. By way of comparison, if a diabetic fails to take insulin, he or she will quickly begin to feel ill.

On the contrary, when there are few asthma triggers present, an asthmatic might be able to go without medicine for a while without ill effect, Tinkelman said. That lack of medicine, however, will eventually catch up with the asthmatic.

"Asthma medications can be hard to take on a regular basis, but if you want to prevent asthmatic episodes from keeping you from work or your child out of school, it's important to take controller medications daily," said Tinkelman.

There are two types of medication available to treat asthma. One type are the fast-acting "rescue"

medications, such as albuterol inhalers that immediately start to relieve symptoms. Another type are the controller medications, such as corticosteroid inhalers that help reduce inflammation and can keep symptoms from flaring up.

DIABETES MONTH

November is diabetes awareness month. An estimated 21 million children and adults in the United States are living with diabetes, and another 54 million people are at risk, according to the American Diabetes Association.

Diabetes often goes undiagnosed because many of its symptoms seem so harmless. Recent studies show that the early detection of diabetes symptoms and treatment can decrease the chance of developing the complications of diabetes.

The complications of undiagnosed or uncontrolled diabetes include blindness and renal (kidney) failure, and an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, heart attack and stroke.

Some diabetes symptoms you should be aware of include:

- Frequent urination.

- Excessive thirst.

- Extreme hunger.

- Unusual weight loss,

- Increased fatigue.

- Irritability.

- Blurry vision.

If you are experiencing one or more of these diabetes symptoms, the association strongly suggests that see your doctor right away.

You can also take an online test to find out if you are at risk for diabetes by visiting the ADA Web site at http://diabetes.org/risk-test.jsp

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