

Widening our View

Asthma remains the most common long-term condition affecting 1 in 11 children in United Kingdom. Asthma leads to airway narrowing, cough and wheeze and can be triggered by diverse environmental factors like air pollution, smoking, dust, and mould. This year we are “Widening Our View” in our Ask about Asthma campaign and trying to reach out to all children with asthma and their carers, friends and family and everyone who looks after them.

Ask about Asthma campaign encourages children and their carers to follow four simple steps for better asthma control and these are ensuring the correct inhaler technique, a personalised asthma action plan, asthma review after every attack and annually and be aware of effects of indoor and outdoor pollution on asthma.

It is now well known that both outdoor and indoor air pollution worsens asthma symptoms and children are more at risk as their lungs are still developing and they breathe faster. It is useful to check pollution forecasts before travel, avoid busy roads and carry the rescue inhaler.

In recent years vaping has become extremely popular amongst adolescents who are attracted by the attractive packaging and fruity flavours. Government figures show that 15% of 16–17-year-olds vape regularly. E-cigarettes or vape are battery operated devices that heat up a liquid containing nicotine, flavourings, glycerine, and other substances converting it in a vapour that is inhaled by the user. Recent studies show that vaping can trigger asthma attack and worsen asthma symptoms and second-hand vaping can also have the same effects.

It is hence ever so important that every child with asthma has an annual review and their personalised asthma action plan updated.

Asthma action plan highlights the asthma triggers relevant to the child (e.g., viral infection, exercise, cold air, house dust mite, pollen, or mould), name and colour of the daily preventative inhaler and rescue inhaler and an emergency plan.

Annual review involves assessing asthma control, lung function test, checking inhaler technique and discussing asthma triggers and how to minimise them. These include advice on house dust mite control, increasing ventilation and reducing damp as well as ensuring adequate control of hay fever symptoms.

We must always remind carers about the harmful effects of pollution, smoking and vaping on asthma and support families in deprived areas to obtain better housing facilities.