

# WELLNESS WATCH

Across the Lifespan, Across Indiana



## DECEMBER

[Safe Toys and Gifts Month](#)

[World AIDS Day](#)  
12/1

[National Influenza Vaccination Week](#)  
12/7 – 12/13

## December spotlight - Women, asthma and the holidays

According to the World Health Organization, asthma is defined as a chronic respiratory disease caused by inflammation/swelling of the airway passages in the lungs. The disease's symptoms often include wheezing, shortness of breath and mild to severe coughing.<sup>1</sup> Women who suffer with asthma not only need to be aware of commonly known triggers like pollen, dust, household products, smoke and air pollution, but also how various hormones can impact their quality of breathing. In women, asthma symptoms and management can all be affected by menstrual, pregnancy and menopausal hormones. Some research indicates that changes in estrogen levels can have as much impact on women's airways as allergies and hay fever.<sup>2</sup> The consideration of these natural fluctuations in hormones can be a critical component of managing the airway inflammation associated with asthma.



For any woman who copes with asthma, it is very important that she work with her healthcare provider to identify the stage of her condition, her own personal asthma triggers and what medications or treatment might work best for her. While there is no absolute cure for asthma, it can be controlled if patients know the warning signs of an attack, avoid those things and places that might trigger an attack and follow any additional advice provided by their health provider.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, each person's experience with asthma is unique, but below are some general tips that can help you be aware of triggers for yourself or someone you love:

- Asthma is one of the most common long-term diseases of children, so be considerate of potential triggers if you are hosting holiday gatherings. Noticeable symptoms of asthma can include repeated episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and nighttime or early morning coughing.
- Be prepared for the holidays! If you or your child has asthma, it can be controlled by receiving ongoing medical care and education about

how to manage symptoms and asthma attacks, and by avoiding asthma triggers at school, work, home and outdoors.

- Don't be afraid to speak up. Triggers for asthma can include mold, tobacco smoke, outdoor air pollution, dust mites, pet dander, cockroach droppings, wood smoke and infections linked to influenza, colds and other viruses. The key to preventing an asthma attack is working with family and friends to avoid these triggers and using inhaled corticosteroids and other medicines as needed.

- For women living with chronic asthma, it is important to avoid known asthma triggers, especially before each menstrual period begins and during pregnancy and menopause.<sup>3</sup>

Asthma sufferers must also be aware of possible weather- and celebration-related triggers. Some of the most common concerns include:

- Holiday decorations. They are beautiful and symbolic, but those with respiratory issues must beware if these decorations cause sneezing, coughing or shortness of breath.
- Holiday travel. Traveling to different locales, being in different environments and even traveling with pets can negatively affect someone suffering from asthma. Stay alert to these types of triggers and do not forget to travel with prescribed medications.
- Holiday stress. Stress is often not given the credit it deserves in our lives. Many of the hormones and chemicals released during stressful times can trigger an asthma attack. Airway restriction, tightening of the chest, difficulty breathing (especially shortness of breath) and increased coughing/sneezing can be indicators of possible trouble. Practice good self-care and take breaks from stressful situations if possible. And, of course, always seek medical assistance when necessary.<sup>4</sup>

To learn more about asthma and find helpful resources, visit the [ISDH Chronic Respiratory Disease Section](#) webpage.

This article provided by Kimberly M. Bentley, Ph.D., MPH, CRT

## Safe sleep practices mean safer Hoosier babies

The Indiana State Department of Health, in collaboration with the Indiana Department of Child Services, has established partnerships with agencies in the State of Indiana to provide free safe sleep education and Infant Survival Kits for families who do not have a safe place for their infants to sleep. As part of the program, educational materials are provided that will help caregivers learn more about safe sleep, prenatal care and smoking cessation. Educational messages around safe sleep focus on three key risk reduction recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and National Institutes of Health: infants sleep safest alone, on their backs and in a separate, safe sleep environment.

In 2013, 14 percent of infant deaths in Indiana were due to Sudden Unexplained Infant Deaths (SUIDS). This includes babies who died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or accidental suffocation in bed. The Safe Sleep Program works to provide babies a safe place to sleep and lower the number deaths due to unsafe sleep environments. The Infant Survival Kits include a portable crib, fitted crib sheet with a safe sleep message on it, a sleep sack, a pacifier and educational materials. The Infant Survival Kits are distributed with a mandatory education component, which helps families understand things like the importance of prenatal care and avoiding tobacco and other drugs, as well as the importance of making sure that anyone caring for an infant is not impaired. Also discussed are the benefits of breastfeeding and safe sleep practices, such as room sharing for nursing moms and babies.



To ensure broad and comprehensive coverage, the Safe Sleep Program has recently added several new agencies to the network. This will assist families with limited transportation and help them avoid having to travel to a site several counties away to participate in the program. New agencies are still being added so that we can ensure all Hoosier families in need can access the resources to provide a safe sleep environment for their infants. The Safe Sleep Program will also be improving its education by encouraging standardization of the safe sleep message across all Infant Survival Kit distribution sites. Handing out cribs and sleep sacks is not enough. The safe sleep materials must be paired with education to make the most meaningful impact. The goal is to standardize the education component so that parents and caregivers across the state are receiving the same messages. The training modules come from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Foundation, as well as the Cribs for Kids organization. Under these guidelines and expectations, Indiana distribution sites have developed training protocols that work best for each individual community. Classes are well-attended and a successful model for education, but one-on-one education is often offered to help accommodate the needs of families. Local sites have even provided emergency kit distribution during the night or on weekends to ensure each infant a safe and good night's sleep. Each site is responsible for collecting demographic data for each child and caregiver who obtains a survival kit so that the program can track outcomes and work to continually improve safe sleep initiatives across Indiana.



To find out more about the IN Safe Sleep Program Distribution Sites in your area, please contact the program coordinator, Kelly Cunningham, at 317.642.4643 or [kcunningham2@isdh.in.gov](mailto:kcunningham2@isdh.in.gov).

To find additional safe sleep and prevention resources, visit the [ISDH Child Fatality Review](#) webpage.

## Keep your holidays healthy and happy

For many of us, the holidays are a time of reflection, family and friends. It is easy to forget, amid all of our activities, that our health must still be at the top of our list. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers some great tips to ensure that you and your family stay healthy and safe this holiday season. Remember to:

- Wash your hands, often and thoroughly. This is the simplest way to prevent the spread of germs.
- Pay attention to your stress levels. Make sure that you have plenty of support from family and friends, particularly if the holidays are a difficult time of year for you. If

you need to talk to someone for support call 1-800-273-TALK or text CSIS to 85511.

- Travel safely. Make sure you have a designated driver if you drink alcohol. Wear a seatbelt and always buckle your children into the appropriate safety seat.
- Get your check-ups and vaccinations. Come to the party prepared and protected by getting your flu shot and other vaccinations. You will be protecting yourself and everyone you love.
- Watch the kids. Kids are busy eating and playing during holiday gath-

erings, so be mindful of choking hazards, unsafe toys, internet safety and fall hazards.

- Prepare and handle food safely. Wash your hands often and keep raw animal products away from ready-to-eat foods and eating surfaces. Ensure that foods are cooked to the proper temperature and refrigerate leftovers immediately.

For more tips and way to keep healthy this holiday season, visit the [CDC Healthy Occasions webpage](#).

## Straight Talk: ISDH tackles injuries head-on

The ISDH has launched a free app that easily links Hoosiers with data and resources about specific injuries and provides strategies to prevent injury at the state and local level. The Preventing Injuries in Indiana: Injury Prevention Resource Guide is available for Android and IOS (Apple) systems.

The app features buttons for 10 common sources of injury, such as distracted driving, sexual assault, prescription overdoses and falls among older adults. Each category includes a description of the scope of the problem in Indiana and the United States, discusses how the problem is being addressed and includes links to resources. Users can search for specific items and download PDF versions of material included in the app, or they can share data from the app through email and social media. The app includes an email address for the health department's Division of Trauma and Injury Prevention, which will be updating and expanding the app in the coming months.

“The goal of the app is to serve as a guide that can provide easily accessi-

ble and understandable information and data on the size and scope of specific injuries in Indiana, while highlighting effective evidence-based solutions to the problem of injury,” said Katie Hokanson, director of Trauma



and Injury Prevention for the health department.

The Injury Prevention app is the second app developed for the ISDH. The MyVaxIndiana app was launched in October 2013 and allows Hoosiers to access their immunization records from mobile devices.

“The injury prevention app will put valuable information at Hoosiers’ fingertips just as MyVaxIndiana allowed residents to quickly access their vac-

ination records,” said State Health Commissioner Jerome Adams, M.D., M.P.H. “It’s exciting to see the ways we can use technology to help keep Hoosiers safe and improve their health.”

You can find the free Injury Prevention Resource Guide app under the Android and Apple stores at the links below:

- **Android store:** <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=doh.in.gov.indianaprevention&hl=en>
- **Apple store:** <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/preventing-injuries-in-indiana/id1037435460?mt=8>

To learn more about injury prevention, Indiana’s trauma systems and registry, trauma centers, upcoming events and resources, visit the [ISDH Trauma and Injury Prevention Division webpage](#).



# Indiana State Department of Health

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Thank you for subscribing to the Office of Women's Health (OWH) Wellness Watch Newsletter. The Office of Women's Health wants to ensure that each woman in Indiana is aware of her own health status, risks and goals, and can achieve optimal health through access, education and advocacy.

- For more information about OWH's programs and initiatives, please visit: <http://www.in.gov/isdh/18061.htm>.
- Follow OWH on [Twitter](#) at [@inwomenshealth](#).
- Follow this link to manage your subscription or to subscribe to the [OWH Wellness Watch Newsletter](#).

## Upcoming Events

Indiana Immunization Coalition  
[End of the Year Celebration 2015](#)  
12/10

Lupus Foundation of America, Indiana Chapter  
[Living with Lupus Seminar](#) – Evansville, IN  
12/16

Indiana University  
[Working with LGBTQ Students in Sexual Violence Prevention Efforts](#) - webinar  
12/16

## References

<sup>1</sup>World Health Organization (WHO), (2015). Health Topics – Asthma.

<sup>2</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2015). Asthma and Women

<sup>3</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2012). Gateway to Health Communication and Social Marketing Practice.

<sup>4</sup>American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology (AAAAI). (2015). Allergies, Asthma, and Winter Holidays.