

For Immediate Release

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Allergies Cause 10,000 School Absences

As children head back to school, parents and educators should be aware of the impact that allergies can have on a child's performance in school. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), as many as 42% of school aged children may suffer from allergic rhinitis. An additional 4% of school-aged children have food allergies. Allergies and their complications can account for more than 10,000 school absences on any given day.

Even if an allergic child is well enough to go to school, the child is often not performing well. The discomfort associated with typical allergy symptoms — sneezing, runny nose, coughing, and/or itchy skin — make it hard to concentrate on school. Often, the congestion from allergies can make it difficult for a child to get a good night's sleep. Furthermore, some allergy medications can cause drowsiness, compounding the struggle to stay awake at school.

The goal for parents and educators is to limit missed or diminished school days and to get the most out of the learning environment for allergic children. Parents and educators can work together to make sure allergic children are staying healthy. Here are some important tips:

- Remind children to take their maintenance medication as prescribed because it can help ward off symptoms of allergies and asthma.
- Make sure your child knows what triggers their allergies, and to avoid those triggers.
- Encourage them to ask school personnel for help if symptoms occur.
- Schools remodeled over the summer could have additional allergens. New carpeting and paint, as well as classroom pets and mold, can aggravate allergies and asthma. Visit your child's classroom early to identify triggers.
- Parents should communicate with educators early in the school year about their child's allergies and about removing allergens from the room, like classroom pets or certain snack foods.

- Make sure your child feels comfortable asking questions about foods they aren't sure about. Let them know it is okay to ask cafeteria staff about the food.
- Cafeteria staff should be well trained on handling children's food questions.
- Implement a "No Trade" rule. Children with food allergies should not trade their food with other children for any reason. Even if the school does not have this policy, you can implement it at home.

While making these types of changes can help keep allergic children safer at school, there is also a treatment option available that could help them change the underlying allergic disease so these triggers no longer affect them. It's called sublingual immunotherapy, or allergy drops which are given under the tongue.

Sublingual immunotherapy has proven especially helpful for children with eczema and recurrent ear infections, which often have underlying allergic causes. "We know that treating children for specific allergies including dust mite, egg and wheat, and conditions such as eczema and allergic rhinitis, can lower the incidence of their developing asthma and other chronic conditions later in life," says XXXXXXXX, MD, a local allergy specialist who treats patients using sublingual immunotherapy. "Treating allergies early can have long-term benefits, not only by controlling chronic illnesses, but by simply keeping kids in school."

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