Back to school asthma attack increase sparks health warning

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An annual surge in the number of children hospitalised due to asthma attacks in September has sparked a health warning to parents as their children settle back into school.

Charity Asthma UK warns that hospital admission data from the past five years reveals the number of youngsters needing emergency treatment for asthma in September is consistently more than double the number who needed it just a month earlier, in August.

In 2014 alone, the emergency hospital admissions for children with asthma in England, Scotland and Wales rocketed from 926 in August to 2,366 in September – a 155 per cent increase.

This worrying trend is believed to be due to children suddenly being exposed to cold and flu viruses on their return to class after the summer holidays, which are a common trigger of asthma attacks.

Lack of routine with medicines over the school holidays could also be an added factor. This means the protective benefits of a child's preventer inhaler, which build up over time, are reduced when they return to school, so their airways are more likely to react to any asthma triggers, like cold and flu viruses and cold weather.

Andrew Proctor, Director of Advice and Support at Asthma UK, said: "There are 1.1 million children in the UK with asthma, and we know from surveys that two thirds of them have had an asthma attack at school. It must be incredibly worrying for a parent to receive a phone call telling them their child has had an asthma attack. The good news is that by taking a few simple steps parents can keep children as healthy as possible and reduce the chances of this happening.

"First of all, make sure your child has a written asthma action plan. We know that people with asthma are four times more likely to end up in hospital for their asthma if they don't use one. If your child doesn't have a plan, book an appointment with the GP or asthma nurse, who will help you write one as part of an asthma review.

"It's also important to share the action plan with your child's school. That way if the worst happens and your child has an asthma attack at school, staff will know exactly what to do. Be sure to give the school a spare asthma reliever inhaler, (usually blue), in case your child forgets to take theirs in. Do also talk to your child about who they need to tell at school if they're feeling unwell with their asthma."

Back to school statistics (Age 5-19)*

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	Aug	Sep	Aug	Sept	Aug	Sep	Aug	Sep	Aug	Sep
England	788	2240	557	1449	703	1836	583	2212	757	2125
Scotland	127	198	95	155	107	201	137	209	127	166
Wales	53	89	56	100	42	114	23	108	42	75
Totals	968	2527	708	1704	852	2151	743	2529	926	2366

For further back to school tips from asthma experts and to download a children's asthma action plan visit: www.asthma.org.uk/back-to-school or call the Asthma UK Helpline on 0300 222 5800 to speak to an

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For more information please contact the Asthma UK media team on mediaoffice@asthma.org.uk, 020 7786 4949 (during office hours) or 07951 721393 (outside of office hours).

*Data sources: Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) data (England), Information Services Division (ISD) Scotland and NHS Wales.

About Asthma UK

- Asthma UK's mission is to stop asthma attacks and cure asthma. We do this by funding world leading research, campaigning for improved care and supporting people to reduce their risk of a potentially life threatening asthma attack.
- Asthma UK is solely funded by public donations
- The Asthma UK Helpline is open weekdays from 9am to 5pm on 0300 222 5800.
- For more information about asthma please visit www.asthma.org.uk

Background information on asthma

- In the UK, 5.4 million people are currently receiving treatment for asthma: 1.1 million children (1 in 11) and 4.3 million adults (1 in 12).

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