

Welcome to DailyHerald.com

[Subscribe](#)[Customer Services](#)[Contact Us](#) [Advertise](#) [Archives](#)[Merchandise](#)



Select your community

per Ad Keywords  Bottom of Form

•

## Living with asthma

## BY JANICE YOUNGWITH

Like many suburban families with children, the Dorfman family of Grayslake is constantly on the go — sharing family time at the kids' baseball games and horseback riding competitions.

They also share a common chronic health concern of the lungs — asthma.

Parents Stephanie and Alan Dorfman, their son, Zach, 15, and daughter, Shelby, 12, are among the 14 to 17 million Americans for whom asthma is a serious health concern, causing bronchial tubes in the lungs to react to different stimuli by becoming inflamed, constricted and narrowed. Symptoms often include shortness of breath, tightness in the chest, coughing and wheezing.

### What is asthma?

While asthma breathing problems generally happen in episodes or attacks, the inflammation underlying asthma is continuous.

According to the American Lung Association, asthma is the most common chronic disorder in childhood, affecting an estimated 6.2 million children under 18. Surprisingly, women are more likely to have asthma than men and the percentage of young women diagnosed with asthma is on the rise.

Severe asthma can lead to respiratory failure and death. Asthma kills 5,000 people each year and as many as 470,000 seek treatment for asthma symptoms.

"It's something which impacts

everything I do," notes Stephanie, 42, who says the disease touches her life both at home as she manages hectic family schedules, doctor visits, school plans and medications, and professionally in her 16-year career as a respiratory therapist at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge.

To help keep tabs on individual respiratory status, the entire family uses a peak flow meter every morning during the spring and fall when pollens and molds can act as "triggers."

Stephanie says family members all know normal and personal best peak flow numbers and all carry a rescue medication designed to help open restricted airways within minutes.

If asthma is well controlled and patients know individual normal rates, peak flow measurements may only be required as symptoms worsen. Others with more severe asthma may require several measurements daily, according to experts.

"You never know when or where something is going to trigger an asthma attack," says the mom of two who was first diagnosed with the condition at age 3. "Our goal is to live every day as fully and symptom-free as possible, but to be prepared if and when we encounter an asthma trigger."

Mom, dad (who developed asthma as an adult after suffering chronic allergies for years) and Shelby, a seventh-grader at Grayslake Middle School, all use controller medications to help counter daily asthma-related symptoms as they reduce and control swelling and inflammation common



[Return to full page in "Breathe Easy"](#)

in asthmatic lungs.

For 15-year-old Zach, Grayslake Center High School sophomore and avid baseball player and golfer, colds and exposure to various asthma triggers can cause symptoms to flare up.

"As an active teen, he carries a rescue inhaler in his backpack, baseball bat bag and golf bag, in addition to having rescue medicines at home," she explains. "His trigger often is an unavoidable cold which starts as a runny nose and cough, progressing quickly to include difficulty breathing."

Both children, the Dorfman's say, have special legal and written 504 school plans in place, detailing the physical impairment which limits one or more major life activities such as breathing.

"The 504 plan protects a child's rights and health while at school and falls under the provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1973," she explains. "The plan is renewed or updated annually or each time Shelby or Zach change schools."

### **How is asthma treated?**

"Asthma is a chronic disease which cannot be cured, but medicines and



**Dr. Lisa Sullivan**

lifestyle changes can help control symptoms," says Dr. Lisa Sullivan, who is board-certified in pediatrics and allergy/immunology and has offices in Libertyville, Gurnee and

Highland Park.

Her tips for parents whose children

are newly diagnosed with asthma?

"Learn all you can," advises Sullivan, who is on staff at Condell Medical Center, Children's Memorial, Lake Forest Hospital and Evanston Northwestern Healthcare. "Start by learning whether your child's asthma is of the allergic or non-allergic variety. This means identifying triggers such as exercise, allergens, cold air, respiratory infections, or various foods and drugs."

The next step, she says is to anticipate or avoid those triggers.

*See Asthma, page 7*

*continued from page 2*

"If allergens are to blame, concentrate on your child's bedroom and create a perfect allergen-free environment," she suggests. "Restrict dust by removing carpets and curtains, purify air with a non-ionic HEPA filter, clear clutter, outlaw pets and keep furnishings minimal, sleek and even boring. It offers your child an allergy-free sanctuary and enables them to start each day with a fresh slate."

If asthma symptoms are persistent, your child may need a daily controller therapy medication as a preventive measure, notes the specialist who completed her post-graduate residency in pediatrics and fellowship training in pediatric and adult allergy/immunology at Rush-Presbyterian St. Luke's Medical Center, Chicago.

"Remember, keep routines simple," she adds. "Ask your child's doctor if a once-a-day dosage will help improve compliance. Many times these medications can be given in one puff."

Controller medications, Sullivan says, need to become part of your child's daily routine. Her suggestion? Keep it next to the toothbrush and use medication before brushing teeth each morning.

An asthma action plan, she says is key.

"Your doctor should be able to help you develop a simple plan and outline what to do if your child gets a virus or if they are in a track meet," she explains. "The plan should outline signs and symptoms as well as detailing what medications to take when. It should also specify how often to measure peak flow rates and what to do for readings in the red, yellow and green zones."

Because asthma is dynamic, Sullivan says hormone changes, seasons and even growth can mean big changes in your child's action plan.

"Follow up regularly with your child's pediatrician or allergist," she recommends. "If their asthma is out of control, they may need to be seen every month. If asthma is controlled, follow ups may stretch to every three or four months."

**Published on 4/11/2007**

This Chicago Suburbs Breathe Easy Special Sections Page may contain time-sensitive information and offers.

Please check with advertiser to confirm availability.

- 
- [< Prev Page](#)
  - [Next Page >](#)

- [Special Sections](#)
- [Service Directory](#)

POWERED BY TRAVIDIA



[News](#) [Cook County](#) [Dupage County](#) [Kane County](#) [Lake County](#) [McHenry County](#) [Illinois](#) [Nation & World](#) [Obituaries](#) [Opinion](#) [Politics](#) [Special Reports](#)

[Business](#) [Stocks/market info](#)

[Sports](#) [Prep](#) [College](#) [Bears](#)[Blackhawks](#) [Bulls](#)[Cubs](#)[Fire](#)[Sky](#) [White Sox](#) [Photo reprints](#)

[Entertainment](#) [Movies](#) [Movie times](#) [Puzzles](#) [TV listings](#)

[Lifestyle](#) [Commitments](#) [Anniversaries](#)[Engagements](#)[Weddings](#)[Place Commitment](#) [Food](#) [Health & Fitness](#) [Home & Garden](#) [Travel](#)

[Real Estate](#) [Search for homes](#) [Real estate articles](#)

[Marketplace](#) [Place an ad](#) [Autos](#) [Homes](#) [Jobs](#) [Service directory](#) [More classifieds](#) [Garage sales](#) [Photo reprints](#)

[Customer Services](#) | [Jobs at Daily Herald](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Feedback](#)

Copyright © 2007 Daily Herald Inc. All rights reserved. | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

Visit other Daily Herald sites:  