

National Jewish Health Brings Successful Asthma Program to Southern and Central Colorado

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DENVER — Building on its success in eastern Colorado, National Jewish Health is expanding an asthma education program aimed at both healthcare professionals and patients to 10 counties in southern and central Colorado. In the Asthma Toolkit Program, National Jewish Health will bring its expertise, training and equipment to hometowns where physicians practice and patients live.

National Jewish Health has been ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as the #1 respiratory hospital in nation for 12 consecutive years. Many of its faculty are world-renowned asthma experts who conduct asthma research and help write national guidelines for asthma care.

An outreach coordinator with the program will visit each participating medical practice up to three times to train physicians and their staffs about diagnosing and managing asthma. Each practice will receive a free spirometer, an asthma diagnostic tool, and the training necessary to use it effectively.

Practices that complete the training will also receive Asthma Toolkits for their patients. The free toolkits include a peak flow meter, which patients use to monitor their lung function, an asthma symptom diary, an asthma action plan, and helpful educational materials.

Becky Hutcheson, nurse practitioner at the Washington County Clinic in Akron, Colorado, found the spirometer and asthma toolkit especially helpful. The educational materials in the toolkit, with the reputation of National Jewish behind them, reinforce the lessons she teaches her patients. The peak flow meter and symptom diary help patients give her concrete information that she uses to monitor their health. The spirometry provides a valuable diagnostic tool as well as another convincing, objective measure she uses to convince her patients to take care of their asthma.

'I have wanted something like this all along,' said Hutcheson, who wrote her master's thesis on asthma. "I think it is extremely beneficial."

Hutcheson's patient, Alicia Fischer, is also a fan of the toolkit. The high schooler had given up sports due to her worsening asthma before coming to Hutcheson and receiving the Asthma Toolkit. By monitoring and managing her symptoms more effectively, she reduced her medications, returned to sports, and even brought friends to the clinic to get their own toolkits.

"She is very much in control of her asthma now," said Alicia's mother Susan Bruder. "I don't worry so much about her anymore."

The program, funded by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, began in eastern Colorado in 2008. Initial findings suggest it has made a real difference. Most of the practices have begun using spirometry. Most have also initiated or increase use of asthma action plans, and increased prescriptions of inhaled corticosteroids, the most effective controller medication for asthma. The program leader, Professor of Pediatrics Bruce Bender, PhD, predicts that data they are now collecting will show a drop in hospitalizations due to asthma as well.

"Discoveries made at academic medical centers like National Jewish Health shape the best practices in asthma care," said Dr. Bender. "If we are not careful, however, that expert knowledge can remain secluded within the academic medical community where it serves relatively few. With the Asthma Toolkit Program, we are spreading that expert knowledge to healthcare providers around the state who are using it to improve the health of their patients."

Based on these initial successes, the state provided funding to extend the program to Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, Huerfano, Las Animas, Lake, Park, Pueblo, Teller, and El Paso counties. National Jewish Health is now enrolling

primary care practices interested in participating in the program. For more information, call 719-544-7833.

National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 121 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the [media resources page](#).

Media Contacts

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