

Breathe FOR LIFE

A Church Toolkit for Reducing Asthma

Asthma can be controlled.

When you know how to control asthma, it no longer controls you.



A toolkit to help your congregation and church family take control of their lives through education

You Are Blessed. Stay hopeful.

“Dear Friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.”

3 John 1:2 (NIV)

African Americans die from asthma at more than two times the rate of white Americans and have the highest death rate of all races and ethnic groups.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Asthma continues to be a serious public health problem. African Americans have higher rates of asthma emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and deaths.

The good news is that asthma can be controlled. People with asthma can live healthy, active lives. Knowing the warning signs, symptoms and triggers are important in preventing asthma attacks.

The **Breathe for Life** toolkit is a manual that will help your congregation be better informed and engaged in asthma management. **Breathe for Life** will provide tools, handouts, and resources to to increase asthma awareness in your congregation.

Implementing **Breathe for Life** will be a blessing for you and your congregation.

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Purpose of the Toolkit

*Don't you know
that you yourselves
are God's temple
and that God's
Spirit lives in you?
If anyone destroys
God's temple, God
will destroy him;
for God's temple is
sacred, and you are
that temple.*

1 Corinthians 3: 16-17 (NIV)

B*reathe for Life* is an asthma wellness guide developed for African American churches by pastors, ministry leaders, and health educators. The guide is designed to create awareness of asthma within the congregation and educates its members on ways to reduce asthma triggers and enhance communication between the healthcare professional and patient. Asthma can be controlled.

For optimal success **Breathe for Life** requires:

- An environment that supports good spiritual, mental, emotional and physical health
- Ministerial leadership
- A proactive health ministry and peer counseling among members will also help with successful toolkit implementation

This toolkit explains how to conduct the program and teaches how to develop a **Breathe for Life** program to fit your congregation. The program, designed by church and community leaders, includes a pastor guide and additional educational materials.



The Power of Awareness and Education

African Americans are at risk for many serious and often life threatening illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, cancer, and HIV/AIDS. African Americans are more likely to suffer from serious health problems and die from these diseases as a result of receiving treatment too late. Asthma affects individuals of all ages, from infancy

to later adulthood and is often undiagnosed.

While there is no cure for asthma, there are a variety of medical and environmental interventions and policies that can help people manage asthma. This guide outlines key steps to reduce the triggers and the impact asthma may have on your congregation.

Both nationally and in Wisconsin, adults aged 65 and older have the highest asthma mortality rates, while children with asthma have higher rates of hospitalizations and ED visits compared to older adults.

Access to care and removal of asthma triggers is important for people with asthma.



Involving Churches in Asthma Education and Awareness

You are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you. If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17) (NIV)

Traditionally, African American churches have been the pillar of education and spiritual guidance to the community. Many African American churches are committed to developing policies that will impact on their congregations. Today, churches are working together to address many of the health issues that impact African American communities. Pastors and churches can position themselves as Ambassadors of Health, providing key health education and awareness to members.

African American churches are creating health ministries that educate its members on ways to

recognize, prevent and possibly eliminate illnesses. Church members are eager for accurate information and data. Lack of health information can separate one from their full fellowship with God.

With your commitment, the power of the church can provide mind, body, soul, and spiritual support to a stressed community. Church ministries and members may be trained as educators to inform their congregation and the community at large on ways to strengthen their spiritual foundation through better health. No other organization can reach the African American community as effectively as the African American church.

The Benefits for Your Congregation

No one ever thinks about breathing freely until they or a loved one cannot. The ***Breathe for Life*** program will help your congregation embrace a holistic approach to wellness by educating them on how to have a healthier lifestyle.

By delivering sermons that include asthma information, your messages can help members to:

- Understand the connection between health and spirituality.
- Communicate better with their physicians, clinic staff or medical providers about asthma.
- Feel empowered to take charge of their health.
- Learn to better manage or eliminate environmental triggers

Some ways your congregation can make decisions that help people with asthma:

- Develop a task force to review cleaning supplies used in the church and develop a list of cleaning materials, safe for people with asthma.
- Adopt policies to use safe cleaning chemicals in the church community.
- Obtain and disseminate health information and resources at the church.
- Conduct activities to educate members about asthma.

- Celebrate and acknowledge the month of May as Asthma Awareness Month each year.
- Advocate for asthma related policies and programs with policy makers.



The Effects of Asthma

Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

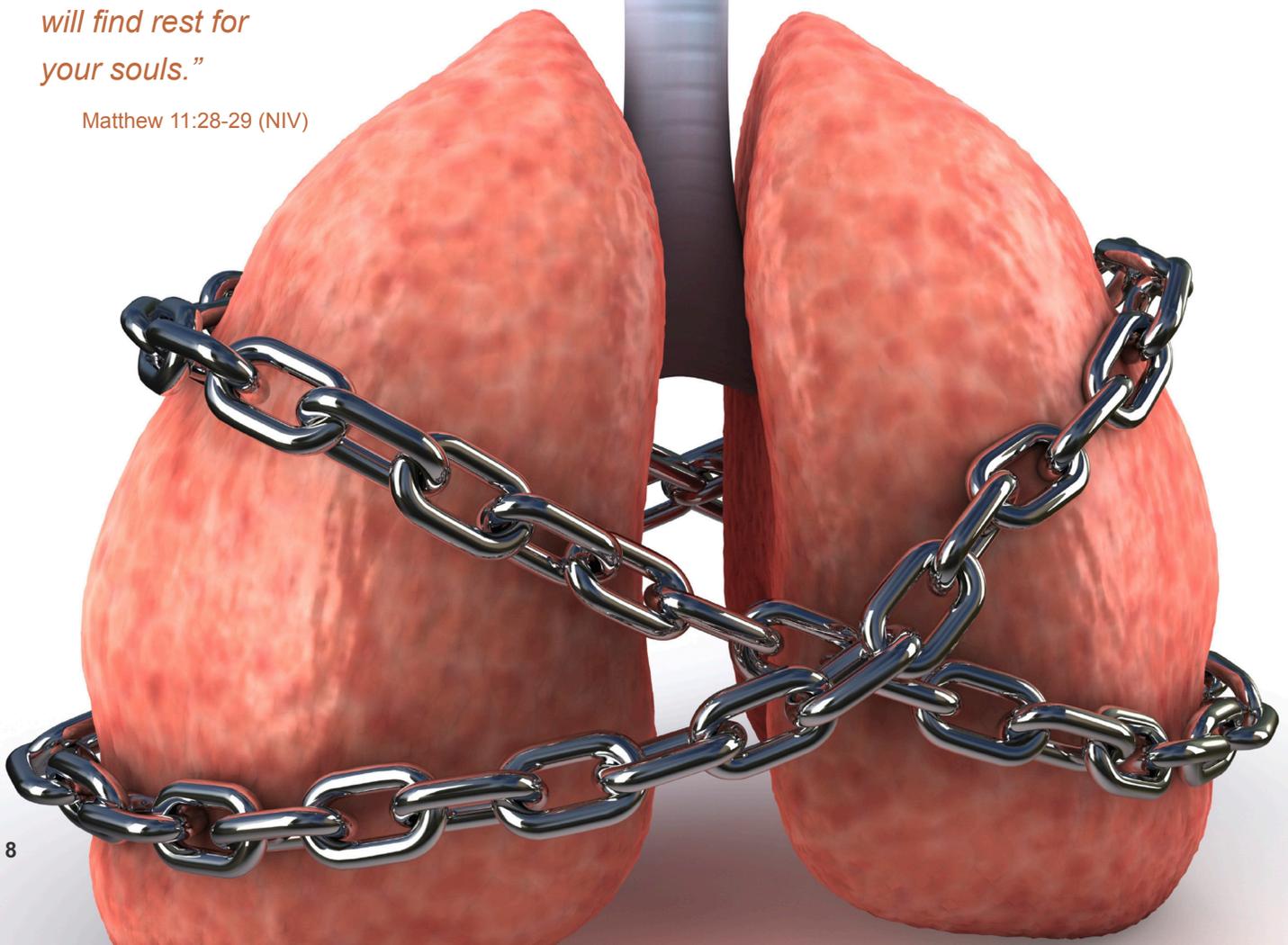
Matthew 11:28-29 (NIV)

According to recent estimates, asthma affects 300 million people in the world and more than 22 million in the United States. 9.8% of adults and 6.9% of children in Wisconsin currently have asthma. Asthma kills about 255,000 people worldwide every year and in Wisconsin, about 235.

When hit with asthma, most people will feel overwhelmed with:

- Loss of freedom
- Fear of suffering
- Fear of dying

Tobacco smoke has been linked to a higher risk of asthma, as well as a higher risk of death due to asthma, and respiratory infections. In addition, children of mothers who smoke — and other people exposed to second-hand smoke — have a higher risk of asthma diagnosis. Adolescent smoking has also been associated with increased asthma risk.



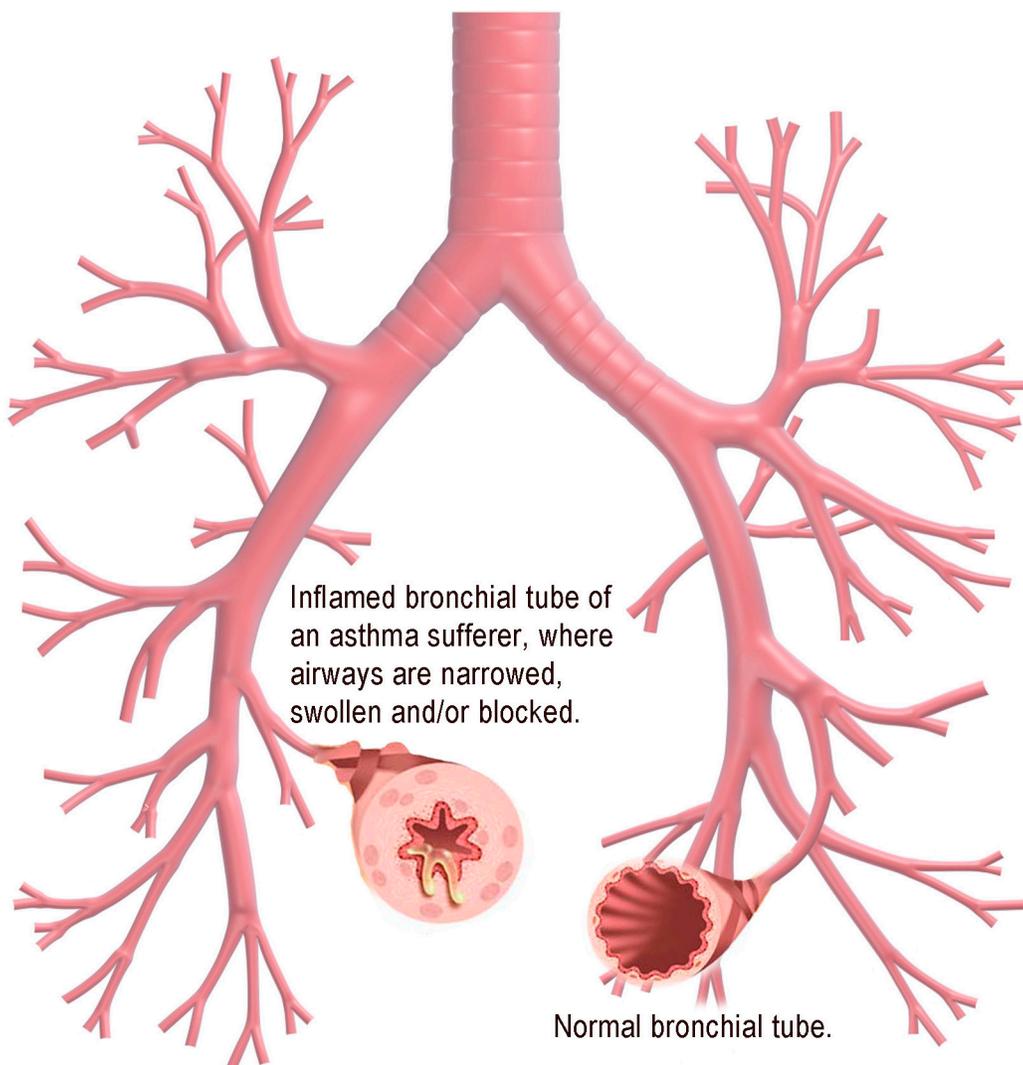
What is Asthma?

Asthma is a disease affecting the airways that carry air to and from the lungs. It is a chronic condition, long-lasting or recurrent. For people with asthma, the inside walls of their airways are swollen, narrowed, and/or blocked.

Asthma is one of the most common chronic diseases and is one of the leading causes of school and work absences. While asthma currently can't be cured, it can be controlled and managed so that people are able to be active and healthy.

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:29-31 (NIV)



Inflamed bronchial tube of an asthma sufferer, where airways are narrowed, swollen and/or blocked.

Normal bronchial tube.

Asthma and Older Adults

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.

3 John 1:2 (NIV)

Older adults with asthma need to take special care of themselves because asthma-related deaths are highest in the 65-year plus age group. There are a number of possible reasons for this:

- As we age our body loses its flexibility and elasticity and so do our airways.
- Each time you have a chest infection, pneumonia or a severe asthma attack, the lungs may get tiny scars, which can affect their efficiency.
- Due to other health problems, many older adults may not be able to exercise and exercise can help with asthma management.
- Older adults are more susceptible to colds and flus, which can often lead to asthma attacks.
- The chronic pain of conditions like arthritis can put additional stress on the body, increasing the likelihood of asthma attacks.

Advise older adults when they get sick they should see their doctor, increase their fluid intake, keep warm, avoid foods or activities which may be a trigger for asthma. It helps to do gentle exercises every day, which could include walks around the rooms of their home or apartment.

Eat small regular meals and remember to drink lots of water. Asthma can cause dehydration.



Asthma Triggers

It's important to be aware of the things that could have an impact on breathing function. Knowing and having a better understanding can reduce and even avoid risks.

The following are some asthma triggers that may impact a person's ability to breathe found in homes, churches, work, or school:

- Tobacco smoke
- Dust and dust mites in hymnals, Bibles, pews, carpets, and bedding
- Molds
- Pests (cockroaches, rats, mice)
- Pesticides
- Household cleaners
- Gases or fumes
- Cooking smoke
- Strong odors (permanent or dry erase markers)
- Perfume and air fresheners
- Hairspray
- Pollen
- Smog
- Extreme weather (too hot or too cold)
- Chalk dust
- Pet dander
- Exercise or physical exertion
- Stress

Tobacco smoke includes:

- **First hand**—Directly inhaled
- **Second hand**—Being near someone else who is smoking
- **Third hand**—Smelling smoke left on things like clothing, furniture and people.

Check your church for the following environmental triggers:

- Tobacco smoke
- Dust/dust mites
- Animal hair/dander
- Cockroaches
- Rodents
- Indoor mold
- Pollen/outdoor mold
- Smoke/strong odors/sprays
- Candles/incense
- Flowers/trees/potted plants

It is especially important to remove indoor asthma triggers. On average, Americans spend 90% of their time indoors.

(EPA, 2009)



Asthma Myths and Truths

Asthma medicine is addictive.

False. Asthma is a chronic long-term condition, so patients with asthma may always need to take medication, but it is not because they are addicted to the medication.

Everyone who has asthma will outgrow it.

False. In about 50% of children with asthma, the condition may become inactive in the teenage years, but may reoccur at anytime in adulthood.

If my child has asthma, he or she should not be allowed to play like other children and shouldn't take gym class or play any sports.

False. All kids need to play and exercise to be healthy. Some people have exercise-induced asthma and may need to use medications prior to exercise.

You are likely to develop asthma if someone in your family has it.

True. You have a 6% chance of having asthma if neither parent has the condition; a 30% chance if one parent has it; and a 70% chance if both parents have it.

If my child takes asthma medicine everyday for a long time, it will lose effectiveness and won't work when he or she is really sick.

False. Only emergency asthma medications lose effectiveness. Those medications should not be used everyday. Talk to your healthcare provider about your medication use.

The steroids used to treat asthma are the same as the steroids used by athletes to get bigger and stronger.

False. Inhaled corticosteroids are used to treat asthma and only affect the lungs.

Holistic medicine can cure asthma naturally.

False. There is no cure for asthma. Holistic cures can complement traditional medical treatment.

Breathing into a paper bag will help asthma.

False. Breathing into a paper bag will NOT help asthma and may do more harm than good.

I can stop taking my medicine when I feel good and don't have any symptoms or problems breathing.

False. You should only stop taking controller medication when you have been instructed to do so by your healthcare provider.

Use bleach or ammonia to clean up mold/mildew.

False. Use mild detergent to remove mold. Try to find and eliminate the source of the moisture.

You can catch asthma from someone else who has it.

False. Asthma is not contagious.

Customizing *Breathe for Life* for Your Church

Each and every church has different needs, concerns and goals in mind when it comes to educating its congregation about health. With this in mind, the ***Breathe for Life*** program can be customized to fit the needs of your congregation. This section gives tips for creating a planning group and a *Call to Action* for pastors and the various ministries that exists within the church.

Creating a Planning Group:

The pastor may appoint a volunteer program coordinator to manage the ***Breathe for Life*** program. The planning group is usually made up of 5 to 10 church members affiliated with the different church ministries.

The overall goals of the group are to:

- Tailor ***Breathe for Life*** to meet the needs of the congregation.
- Coordinate and promote the health issues of the program.
- Track the success of the ***Breathe for Life*** program.
- Advocate for asthma programming in your church and other settings (schools, hospitals, etc).

A good way to begin planning the ***Breathe for Life*** program is to incorporate its lessons and materials into the Church's existing programs, celebrations, Sunday school and into special awareness months. In addition, the planning group could organize a series of stand-alone ***Breathe for Life*** activities or discussions to educate various groups.

Tips for a Successful Planning Group

- Schedule regular meetings so that everyone can plan ahead to attend.
- Always prepare an agenda with specific goals for each meeting. This will help the group to track the success of their work.
- Create a system for regular communication with group members.
- Create small working groups to target each audience (youth, women, men, etc.)
- Encourage the planning group to think creatively to educate members.
- Be patient. Church-based programs take time, but they are incredibly rewarding and worth it.

Call to Action for Ministers and Pastors

Historically, the church has provided for the educational and spiritual needs of African Americans and continues to be a focal point for numerous community activities. Ministers and pastors have always been the traditional leaders who are able to make a difference in the lives of their congregation and surrounding community. It makes perfect sense to provide asthma education programs in the local church, a setting central to African Americans of all ages.

Ministers and pastors can be the catalyst to influencing behaviors and improving health conditions and lifestyles. Pastors can deliver sermons with health messages that can be connected to key scriptures or bible stories. The following is a list of suggested sermon topics:

THEME *Taking Care of Your Body is the Right Thing to Do*

Key Points

- ✓ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. — Romans 12:1 (NIV)
- ✓ The Apostle Paul exhorts and urges that we present our bodies a living sacrifice, meaning since we are alive having the ability to still breathe, that we be holy (set apart) and acceptable to God. When we take care of our bodies God is well pleased. The idea of reasonable service in the text indicates the rational or the right

thing to do with our bodies as service unto the Lord. Living with asthma may be a sacrifice but God is able to help us through every situation. It also calls for a sacrifice for those who are well to help those who are sick, and God would be pleased with our reasonable service.

- ✓ A temple is a place where God is present. Isn't it wonderful to think that God's presence is in each of us? Isn't this the most marvelous reality of the Christian life?
- ✓ It's to be understood that God has two objectives of salvation: First, to bring us into God's heavenly home. This is the future of every Christian. And second to make us God's temple where the presence dwells. This is the present reality of every believer's life.
- ✓ What does God want from us? This can be answered by studying the passage where Jesus is found cleansing the temple of Jerusalem.
- ✓ God wants us to be a temple of purity. In *Romans* Verse 12, Christ casts everything that brought moral filth to the temple. God's action would have appeared radical, and yes, sometimes, God should be radical to take those toys of sin that we failed to lay aside because we like them, because we are fond of them. That toy of sin could be a habit, something you are neglecting, or even a person. In this action of Jesus, God demands purity. The key question is how am I using my body or God's temple?

THEME *All up in my business – A wake up call for a better life*

Key Points

- ✓ It's sometimes necessary for us to be "up" in someone's business when we care about our family and friends. So often when we are in the jungle of life, we are unable to see the things that may be causing us the most difficulty. Instead of being hit over the head with a brick, it can be much more loving to receive a sincere tap on the shoulder to help guide us in the right direction to a better life through better health. In 3 *John* 2, John expresses his concern for Gaius' physical well-being and spiritual health. Spiritual vitality and strength are attained through effort. There must be a proactive approach to being healthy. When we are strong, we will be able to withstand the wiles of evil. Putting on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes — Ephesians 6:10-11. (NIV)
- ✓ We must stay spiritually active in order to have a better life. It's important to exercise ourselves into godliness — 1 Timothy 4: 7-8. (NIV)

For other sermon topics, bible studies and Sunday school discussions, please visit the additional resource section for details.



THEME *As soon as I catch my breath*

Key Points

✓ This sermon could provide an introduction about better health as it relates to asthma education. The following biblical passages could be incorporated into the sermon: Children’s Health — In scripture, Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Mathew 19:14) Children hold a special place in our understanding of Christianity; they demonstrate innocence and unquestioning belief. And, we as adult Christians and parents have been charged with teaching them and leading them down the right path.

✓ The church historically has played a role in meeting the health care needs of its congregation. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37, Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-31) Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace there shall ye have peace. —Jeremiah 29: 4-7 (NIV)



Action steps to accompany sermon themes:

- ❑ Utilizing guest speakers with a medical or health background.
- ❑ Disseminating and making resources available to the congregation.
- ❑ Consider holding a healing worship service for church members.
- ❑ Conduct a walk through of the church building to identify environmental triggers like dust in hymnals, mold, opportunities for pests.
- ❑ Create a poster featuring facts on asthma.
- ❑ Place articles on asthma in the church newsletter, bulletin or website.
- ❑ Organize a health fair or health Sunday with neighboring churches.
- ❑ Encourage small discussion groups to discuss asthma and other health issues.
- ❑ Identifying key scriptures that encourage members to develop a healthier lifestyle that includes regular medical checkups, nutritious meals and physical activity.
- ❑ Adopt a No Smoking Sunday and a policy making the church a smoke-free environment.
- ❑ Invite an expert on household asthma triggers to address the congregation.

See additional toolkit materials to help implement these action steps (p. 27).

Suggested Topics for Church Bulletins

JANUARY

Colds and Cold Air

Winter is the cold and flu season. Colds and respiratory infections can lead to asthma flare-ups. Protect yourself.

- Get an annual flu shot
- Wash hands frequently
- Cover your nose and mouth with a mitten or scarf when outdoors

Whoever scorns instruction will pay for it, but whoever respects a command is rewarded.

Proverbs 12:15 (NIV)

FEBRUARY

Asthma Flare-ups

How would you help someone that is having an asthma flare-up?

- Stay calm
- Have the person sit and encourage slow, deep breaths
- Give quick relief medication, call for help if the medication isn't available
- Wait 15 minutes to make sure the medication worked, if not call for help

The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly.

Proverbs 15:14 (NIV)

MARCH

Exercise

People with asthma should be able to exercise as much as anyone else. Everyone needs exercise for healthy lungs. Make an asthma care plan and exercise routine.

- Warm up slowly before exercise
- Always carry your quick relief medicine with you

Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.

Proverbs 19:20 (NIV)



APRIL

Early Symptom Identification

Asthma flare-ups should be treated with medication when the earliest signs are noted.

- Cough (most common sign!)
- Itchy throat
- Not getting enough sleep because of symptoms
- Don't wait for the asthma to get worse! Use quick relief medication right away!

Ears that hear and eyes that see— the LORD has made them both.

Proverbs 20:12 (NIV)

MAY

Asthma Awareness Month

As Christians we recognize that God is the giver of all life and each breath we take can bear witness to His life giving and sustaining nature.

For persons with asthma, breathing may not be easy. We encourage each of you during the month of May to share with your neighbors, family and coworkers the information you receive during Asthma Awareness Month. As children of God, we are to be responsible for our bodies. In *Deuteronomy*, God admonishes us to do all to preserve life. Doing all we can to control asthma within our church demonstrates our commitment to a healthy life for all people with asthma.

Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Genesis 2:7 (NIV)

JUNE

Summer Break

Daily routines change during summer, but don't change your asthma care.

- Follow a written asthma care plan
- Take medications as prescribed (even when not experiencing asthma symptoms)
- Avoid asthma triggers
- Treat asthma symptoms early
- Take controller medications during something that happens all the time, such as right before breakfast

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10 (NIV)



Suggested Topics for Church Bulletins

JULY

Air Quality Control

Bad air quality can harm all people and can cause asthma flare-ups. Here are some tips.

- Check www.air.gov for local air quality updates
- Exercise in the morning or later in the evening, when pollution levels are usually lower
- Spend less time participating in vigorous outdoor activities
- Take it a little easier when you're outside.
- Limit children's time outdoors
- Pay attention to respiratory symptoms, such as coughing, wheezing and discomfort when you take a deep breath.

This is what God the LORD says—he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it.

Isaiah 42:5 (NIV)

AUGUST

Back to School

During this time of the year, there is a spike in asthma and allergies. It's also a time when many people are exposed to Influenza viruses.

Kids with asthma need to breathe to achieve. Follow these tips:

- Give the school a copy of the written asthma care plan
- Keep a quick relief medicine at school or with your child at all times
- Talk to teachers about triggers and early signs
- Consider keeping a peak flow meter at school

My child pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart for they bring life.

Proverbs 4: 20-22 (NIV)

SEPTEMBER

Fall allergies like mold and ragweed can slow you down

Keep allergies from causing asthma flareups by taking your asthma medication and treating symptoms early.

- Always take daily asthma medicines as prescribed, even if you feel OK
- Treat early symptoms including watery eyes, runny nose, and cough
- Insist that quick relief medications be sent on field trips with students who have asthma

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40: 29-31 (NIV)



OCTOBER

Asthma Medications

Long-term control medicines keep swelling down and should be taken daily and quick relief medicines relax muscles and provide immediate relief.

Keep quick relief medicines with you at all times! If you have asthma symptoms more than 2 days per week during the day or more than 2 times per month at night, your asthma is not under control! Talk to your doctor.

Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge.

Proverbs 23:12 (NIV)

NOVEMBER

Smoking

Smoking and breathing second and third hand smoke can trigger asthma.

Help people breathe easier:

- Do not permit smoking in the house or in church buildings
- Do not permit smoking in cars or in church vehicles
- Talk to a healthcare provider about quitting smoking
- Do not allow church staff to smoke when working

This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life.

Ezekiel 37:5 (NIV)

DECEMBER

Holiday Triggers

Enjoy the holidays and stay in control of your asthma.

- Pine needles from trees and wreaths can trigger asthma attacks
- Dusty decorations can cause asthma flare-ups
- Promote lots of rest for those with asthma to reduce stress
- Have guests smoke outside

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Galatians 6:10 (NIV)





Call to Action for Children's Ministry

Getting children involved in learning about asthma early is key to helping them to grow up with a better understanding of it. They will learn that it is controllable with the right treatment.

It's important to speak with children about asthma, whether or not they have it. Almost everyone knows someone who suffers from asthma.

Children love to play and the best way to learn new things is through organized activities and games. More information about planning activities for children can be found in the resource section.



Call to Action for Youth Ministry

When parents, family or church members look at youth that are active in the church or in their community, most adults feel a sense of pride in knowing that today's youth are our future. The church believes that if we teach our children the right way to live, regardless of the distractions, those lessons will be valuable to their future development. Teenagers tend to experiment and try new things (such as smoking). Some of these "experiments" can affect their asthma.

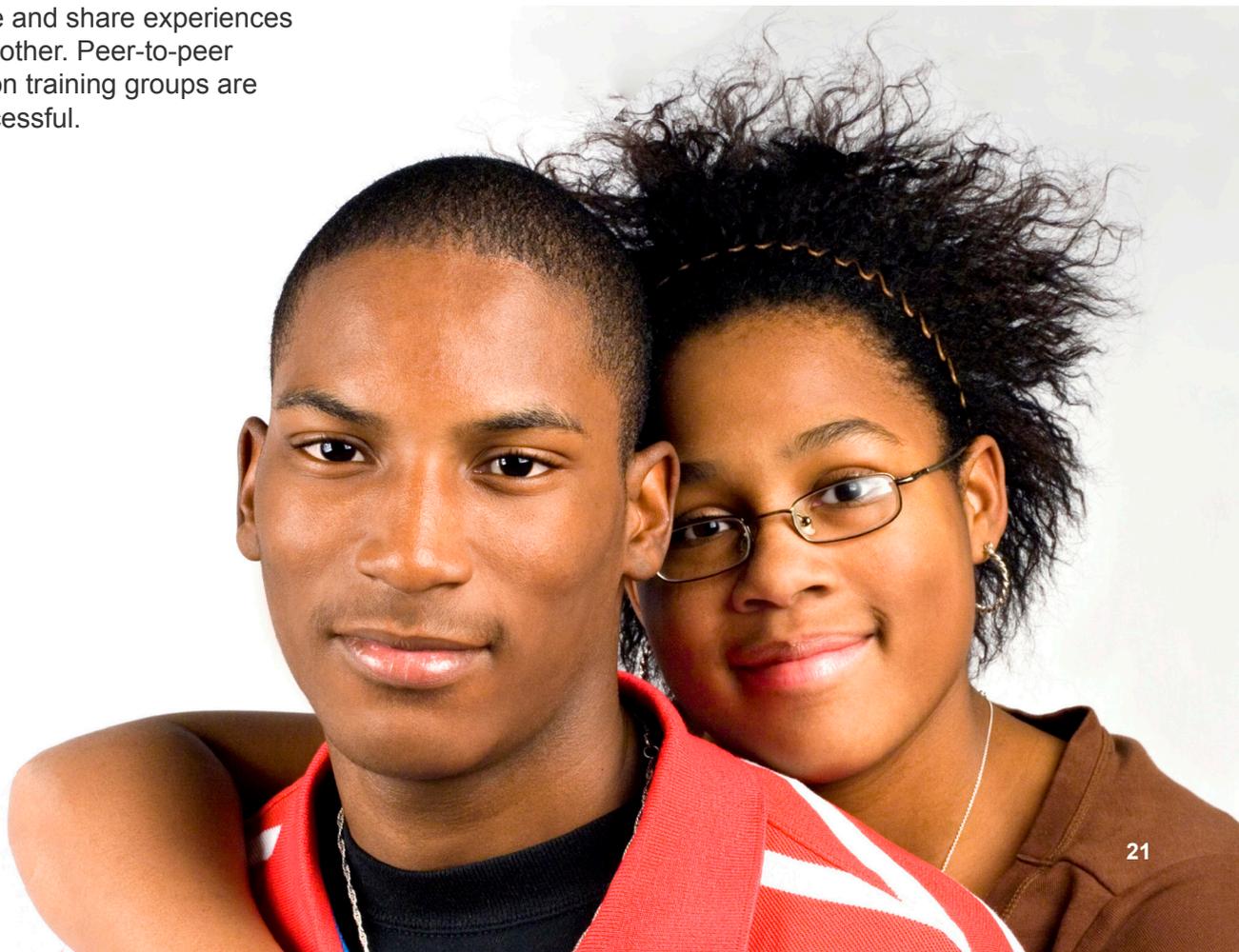
One of the best ways to reach youth with information is for them to educate and share experiences with each other. Peer-to-peer intervention training groups are often successful.

Many youth are natural born leaders willing to become peer-to-peer educators reaching out to others in their age group. This type of program has worked with HIV/AIDS, tobacco prevention, drug & alcohol prevention and many other health issues impacting communities. Peer-to-peer programs train youth on asthma, public speaking, health advocacy, health education and other presentation skills.

More information on creating peer intervention training groups can be found in the resource section.

*Beloved, I wish
above all things that
thou mayest prosper
and be in health,
even as thy soul
prospereth.*

3 John 2 (NIV)



A Call to Action for the Church Family and Community

This material is adapted from GreenFaith's "Resources for Legislative Advocacy"

*Do not forsake
wisdom, and she
will protect you, love
her, and she will
watch over you.*

Proverbs 4:6 (NIV)

Asthma research and interventions have lost a lot of funding recently. Let your elected leaders know that asthma is important to you and your congregation.

The church has played an important role in social community and policy change.

Advocating for asthma will make your church community healthier.

Throughout its history, the Church has always been a voice for the people to the government. Legislative advocacy is an important way the church can contribute to a fair and just society.

Advocacy can be an excellent way to educate your congregation about important public issues and to highlight the Christian teachings that apply to it. Make your advocacy efforts educational. Include a description of the issue and a description of the applicable Christian teachings or values in writing or a personal visit.

While it is counter to IRS rules for a Pastor to give a sermon supporting or opposing a candidate or a political party, a sermon in support of, or opposition to, an issue or a principle, is permitted.

Don't assume that your elected officials know as much about your issues as you do. Representatives can't keep current in all areas of public importance and it is your job to make sure that they understand what you believe and why. So advocacy is important, not only to educate members of your congregation, but your elected officials as well.

Send local and regional newspapers, websites, or other media a press release describing your advocacy efforts.

The more personal your contact with legislators, the more effective it will be.

Send a letter to an elected official; a handwritten note is best, followed by a form letter.

The same is true for e-mails. A personal e-mail is better than form e-mails.

Include your return address and ask for a response. This shows your representatives that you are willing to engage in a dialogue about the issue, and that you expect them to respond.

After letters and e-mails, petitions are the next preferred method of contact. When creating petitions, make sure that you create a space where signers can add their e-mail address. This shows the petition recipient that the people who sign the petition are willing to be contacted about their position.

Note that a phone call to a legislator's office can be as effective as a hand-written letter, and should be encouraged.

Set up an advocacy event

Make sure you have all the materials that you'll need on hand: writing paper, sample letters, envelopes, stamps, educational materials, etc.

Give the people who participate a feeling of accomplishment. Thank them for writing or signing a letter. Tell them when and how their letters will be mailed, or petition sent. Make sure they know that their efforts will make a difference.

Encourage everyone to share any response letters they receive from elected officials.

Publicize your Advocacy Efforts

Send local and regional newspapers, websites, or other media a press release describing your advocacy efforts. The press release should describe the issue on which you are advocating, your position, and the teachings or values that support your view.

Describe the actions that your congregation is taking and include a quote from the pastor describing why your congregation is taking this action.

How to advocate for asthma with your elected leaders and local decision-makers.

- Call
- Email
- Send letters and/or faxes
- Schedule meetings with decision-makers or their representatives

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

James 2:17 (NIV)



*For lack of guidance
a nation fails, but
many advisors make
victory sure.*

Proverbs 11:14 (NIV)

Guidelines on the Law regarding Legislative Advocacy by Religious Institutions

Houses of worship fall under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, a classification which places certain restrictions on congregation-based engagement of political issues. The following is a brief description of these restrictions:

Houses of Worship May Conduct “Issue Advocacy”

Congregations and their representatives may carry out “issue advocacy” through activities such as educating and mobilizing congregants and the general public. For example, congregations may encourage their members and the public to address reducing asthma by continued and increased federal funding of asthma programs. There is no limit on this kind of advocacy activity by religious institutions.

“Issue advocacy” is only acceptable if it does not involve the endorsement of specific candidates for elected office or activity in support or opposition of a political campaign.

Houses of Worship May Conduct “Legislative Advocacy” or “Lobbying” - within Certain Limits

Congregations and their representatives may engage in “legislative advocacy” or “lobbying” as long as this activity constitutes an “unsubstantial” portion of an organization’s “total activities”.

According to the IRS, courts and the IRS have ruled in the past that “total activities” includes the total amount of money, staff, and volunteer time that goes into running the organization. We recommend that congregations limit their legislative advocacy to no more than 5%-15% of their total activities- a limit recommended as safe by experts.

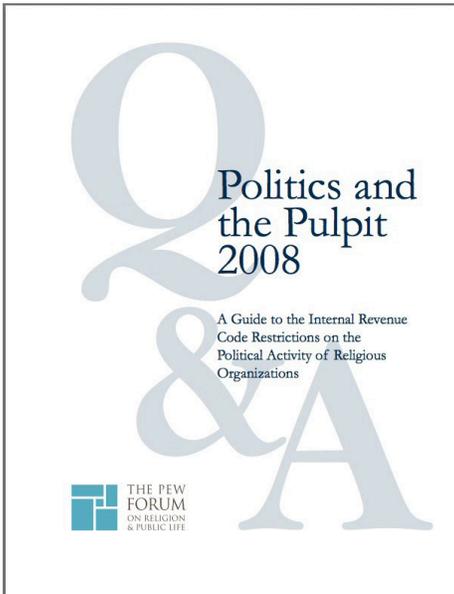
The IRS defines “legislative advocacy” or “lobbying” as advocating for or against specific pieces of legislation. For example, congregation-based letter-writing efforts to encourage a city council, state legislature, and/or Congress to pass a particular law to increase and continue asthma funding would fall under the definition of legislative advocacy or lobbying.

Houses of Worship May Not Advocate for or Against a Candidate for Office, or for a Political Party.

Congregations are not allowed to conduct what the IRS calls “political campaign intervention” — which includes advocating for or against candidates for public office or political parties. This includes fundraising on behalf of candidates and donating meeting space, among other things. For example: supporting a particular candidate or party because of their stance on asthma funding is illegal. Election-related activities such as candidate questionnaires and forums may be acceptable if certain guidelines are followed.

The restrictions on lobbying and political campaign intervention described here apply only to a congregation as a legal entity, or to a person or group speaking in the name of the congregation.

A minister or congregation member may freely engage in these activities as an individual.



For more detailed information on this topic, see the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life’s *Politics and the Pulpit* at <http://bit.ly/pulpitpolitics>

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

Proverbs 22: 11 (NIV)

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San Francisco Bay Area

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Providence Baptist Church of San Francisco
Open Door COGIC
See Ye First Ministries
Community Church
St. James A.M.E. Zion Methodist
Trinity Baptist, San Mateo
The Tabernacle Group
Macedonia COGIC
Saint Samuel COGIC
Bread of Life
Walls of Faith Ministries
Redwood City COGIC

Sacramento

True Life Ministries
Harmony
Faith Fellowship Community
Unity Missionary Baptist
New Direction Christian Center
Shepherd of Life Baptist

Los Angeles

Central Baptist
West Angeles COGIC
Good News Missionary

San Bernardino

Predestined in Christ
Doors of Faith, Hope & Charity
Mission for Jesus Christ
Trinity COGIC
Victorious Baptist
Ecclesia Christian Fellowship
Ephesians New Testament
St. Paul A.M.E.
The Center at Highland
Mission for Jesus Christ
Principle of Faith
New Vision Foursquare
Temple Women's Center
New Hope Missionary
Greater New Jerusalem COGIC
Temple Missionary Baptist

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Contributions by Erin Lee and
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Allies

*If you would like more information about asthma, please visit www.californiabreathing.org or send an email to California.breathing@cdph.ca.gov

Breathe **FOR LIFE**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



The following pages contain resources to support your educational efforts.



When Customizing *Breathe for Life* for Your Audience

Church and community volunteers, especially those with backgrounds in health, can help provide asthma education and outreach programs in your church. Relationships and trust with community organizations concerned about asthma can be an asset. Most organizations and health centers are happy to work with churches, providing speakers, materials, and often food for events.

When planning a ***Breathe for Life*** event, remember to get the message out early and often. Events can be promoted in the church bulletin, newsletters, displays, email, text messaging and on the church's website or other social media page.

Other Sermon, Bible Study and Sunday School Topics

- Controlling Asthma Triggers
- You can't do God's work without taking care of yourself
- Being spiritual, healthy, and wise
- Don't be afraid to share the fears of your illness
- Health in Our Hands: Our health is our wealth
- Life looks better when you feel good
- Great expectations for good health
- Only you can make a difference in your health and in the health of your family
- Breathing freely today from the stresses of life
- Going green with your home and church environments
- Make your home, body, and church a health sanctuary

Children's Ministry:

Breathe for Life Activity

A Sunday school class could initiate a discussion on asthma by asking children if they can blow out candles on a birthday cake or have them blow up a balloon. It could be explained that if a person is unable to breathe freely, or suffers from asthma, they may not be able to succeed. Another example is to have children all stand and form a circle with their thumb and index finger. Once the circle has been formed, each child should take a deep breath and exhale through the circle. Each time, the teacher should instruct the children to make the circle formed with their fingers smaller, showing the difficulty of exhaling through a smaller passage. The latter exercise should take long and become more difficult as the finger circle becomes smaller.

Children could also be led through other activities such as:

- Drawing a picture of an asthma trigger
- Drawing a picture of something that helps control asthma
- Drawing a picture of someone who is struggling to breathe
- Drawing a picture of a body part that God made to help them breathe
- Identifying indoor triggers on a picture of a church/house/room
- Drawing a picture of their own room and identifying potential triggers

- Tracing their bodies on flip chart paper and identifying the parts of their respiratory systems

The message could include:

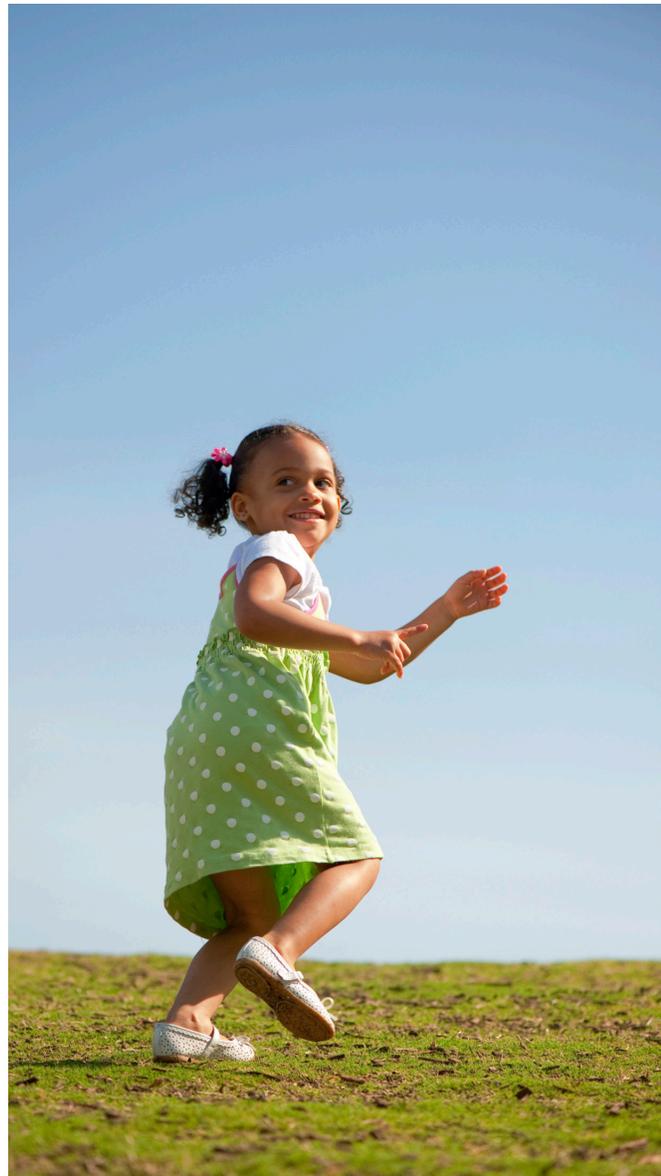
- We have been given the gift of a wonderful body from God and we can blow out candles and blow up bubbles because God planned our bodies to be able to do that.
- When we are exposed to asthma triggers it becomes difficult to blow out a candle, blow up a balloon or to breathe normally.
- When this occurs, it is called asthma. Ask if anyone has ever heard of the word asthma?
- Asthma means that sometimes the air tubes inside us get clogged or smaller and we can have trouble breathing freely.
- When we can't breathe properly, we can't enjoy the wonderful things that God wants us to enjoy everyday.
- Tell the children that we have been blessed to have God give us doctors and nurses to help people with asthma.
- Ask the children if they know of things that can affect their breathing. It's a good time to share some simple asthma triggers.

Youth Ministry: *Breathe for Life* Activity

By developing a peer education program in the church, youth will be able to influence behaviors while educating their peers about healthy life choices, and demystifying the myths of asthma. By starting with the youth, there is hope for a brighter tomorrow.

Youth groups could also be encouraged to:

- Use social media strategies to develop youth & asthma pages on Facebook and MySpace to provide information about Asthma. Twitter is also a good choice in reaching other youth.
 - Text messaging friends and other youth with asthma tips.
 - Create innovative posters about asthma that could be posted in the church or local newspapers. Winners could be given a prize or a gift certificate.
 - Youth leaders could be invited to speak to the congregation about their asthma and the progress they are making in changing behaviors with other youth.
 - Articles could be written and submitted about the peer program and work that is done to educate other youth.
 - Educate their parents and family members about asthma.
 - Develop poetry or rap songs about asthma.
- Develop a video contest about asthma, which could be uploaded to You Tube or other web sites.
 - Design catchy t-shirts for their peer group members
 - Do a walk thru of their classroom, church, or home looking for triggers, sharing the results with each other.



Asthma Web Sites

The following are a list of sites that can provide you with additional information about asthma or air quality.

<http://www.californiabreathing.org>

<http://www.cal-iaq.org/>

<http://asthmaeducationcenter.net>

<http://www.asthma.nmanet.org>

<http://www.myasthma.com/>

<http://www.asthmaline.com/>

<http://www.webmd.com/asthma>

<http://www.aanma.org/>

<http://www.lungusa.org/>

<http://www.aafa.org/>

<http://www.aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/asthma.aspx>

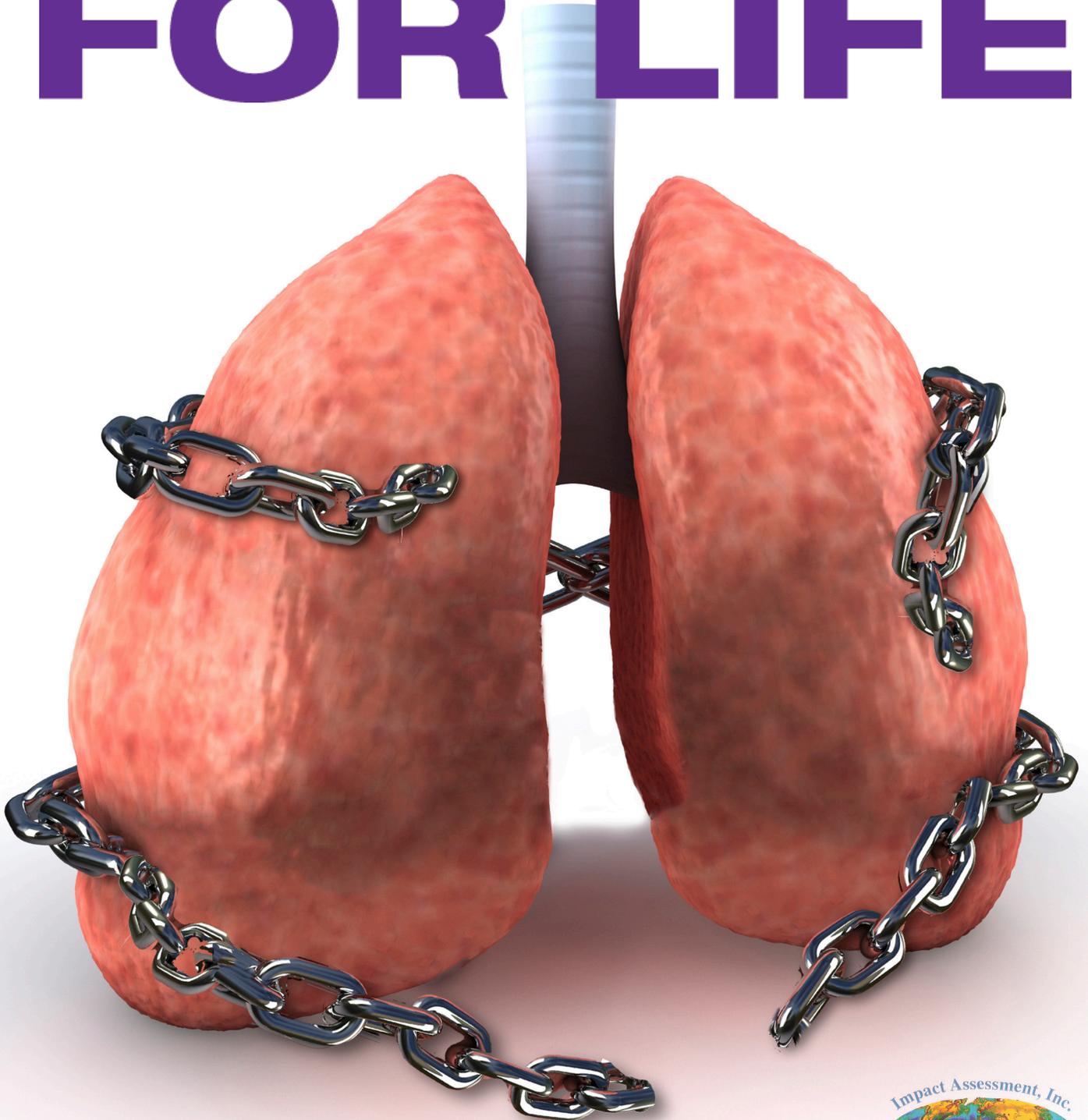
<http://www.epa.gov/asthma>

<http://www.famallies.org/>

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/healthy_homes/healthyhomes/asthma

<http://www.nchh.org>

Breathe **FOR LIFE**



For more information on implementing this toolkit,
please call 415.255.0800 or email AsthmaGuide@gmail.com

