

Free Lung Screening at Saint Anthony's & Saint Clare's

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(Alton, IL) – Saint Anthony's Health Center will be offering a free lung function screening on Tuesday, June 10, between 12:30 – 2 p.m. in the front lobby of Saint Anthony's, and again on Thursday, June 12, between 12:30 – 2 p.m. on the Saint Clare's Hospital campus.

The simple test to check for lung obstruction is a spirometry screening, where an individual takes deep breaths through a spirometer to measure measuring the lungs ability to pull in air. The test is painless and only lasts a few minutes.

With the experts predicting that the 2014 allergy season could be one of the worst, a spirometry test is an excellent way to measure how well your lungs are coping – especially asthma suffers.



Asthma is a complex inflammatory disease of the lungs and airways, and according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), affects more than 25 million people in the United States. Anyone of any age can have asthma, but it disproportionately affects poor children and adolescents living in crowded urban areas.

Saint Anthony's Lead Respiratory Therapist Jessica Boyd warns about dangers of asthma, "Particularly during certain times of year, asthma can cause symptoms severe enough to send many patients to the hospital. A better understanding of the disease can help people avoid these episodes and live a fairly normal life."

Inflammation of the airways is a major factor in asthma. The body's immune system produces an inflammatory reaction in response to what it considers a threat: bacteria, viruses, pollen, dust or other irritants. A person with asthma is hyper sensitive to these irritants and over-reacts, causing additional problems.

“The lining of the airways becomes inflamed and swollen, leaving less room for air to move through, says Jessica. “Muscles around the airways tighten and cause what is known as a bronchospasm. Excess mucus is produced, making it even harder for air to move through.”

The result is coughing, wheezing, tightness in the chest and shortness of breath, particularly in reaction to certain triggers.

These can be very frightening, and, in fact, the CDC estimates that around 3,340 Americans die of asthma-related issues every year. But emergencies can be prevented with monitoring, careful use of medications and understanding of triggers.

“A person with asthma has to be aware of certain triggers in the environment – allergens, pollen, dust, molds, cigarette smoke, air pollution, cold air or exercise,” Jessica says. “For some of these, such as allergens, medications may be useful. Generally speaking, though, the patient must learn to avoid these triggers whenever possible and be ready to respond should they trigger an attack.”

Over the long term, inflammation can be lowered and managed with anti-inflammatory medications taken daily to keep asthma symptoms from occurring in the first place.

“It all starts with education – how and why to monitor your breathing and take control medications even when you don't have symptoms,” says Jessica. “As frightening as the symptoms may be when an attack occurs, it's possible to go through life with few emergencies and a normal quality of life.”

For information about future free spirometry screenings, call Saint Anthony's Health Resource Center at 618-465-2264.

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