



The **2018 Healthy Homes Legislative Breakfast** is **April 26, 2018** from **7:30 to 10:00** at **Elizabeth's Kitchen inside the State House**. All are welcome to exhibit or attend, but must preregister. Please RSVP to anna.carrigan@dhhs.nh.gov.

Ask an Asthmatic

In this month's newsletter, we introduce Alia, a NH resident who has lived with asthma her whole life.

From time to time, she will answer questions about living with asthma in New Hampshire.

This month we asked her about 2 important March events: the Spring Equinox and the International Day of Happiness.



Q: Can you tell our readers a little bit about yourself?

A: My name is Alia Hayes. I have a Master's in Public Health, and am the Rural Health Manager for the Rural Health and Primary Care Section at the Division of Public Health Services. I have lived with asthma since childhood, and am now

parenting a child with asthma, as well. Even though asthma affects my life, I haven't let it stop me from pursuing the things I want to do, such as personal training, playing rugby, and hiking in the woods. I hope to help those living with an asthma diagnosis realize that having asthma doesn't have to stop you from living the life you want.

Q: Even though it's still pretty chilly out, the reality is that spring starts on March 20th! As someone with asthma, do you notice a difference in your condition as the seasons transition from colder to warmer? Are there any changes you frequently have to make this time of year, either to your treatment regimen or your environment, to account for this?

A: While I love living in New England and experiencing the changing seasons, the transition from Winter to Spring is definitely one of the more challenging times of the year for me as an asthmatic with allergies. As the snow melts and creates lots of moisture on the ground and in the air, the growth of mold and the endless pollen present significant physical discomfort. Spring tends to be the time of year when all of the interventions I use are at their peak. Typically, I add in a daily long-acting allergy pill, nasal spray, and have a rescue inhaler ready. I am especially prone to doing this when I am going to be outdoors for an extended period of time.

While I never avoid going outside, I am generally more careful to change my clothes or rinse off my skin/hair before bed (due to both pollen and bug spray). The most difficult part of the allergies that occur in tandem with my asthma are that many of the symptoms I experience (itchy eyes and skin, sneezing, coughing, etc.), do not typically present until the evening - several hours after exposure. I do my best to ensure that I'm using all of my preventative medication, and I also try to wipe down things more often in my house. When necessary, we use air conditioning in bedrooms at night to reduce exposure to pollens. I also typically use the air conditioning more liberally in the car since the wind-blown pollen in my face tends to aggravate my symptoms even more than nighttime exposure.

Q: March 20 is also the International Day of Happiness. What are some ways you've found, either because of or in spite of your asthma, to find enjoyment in your day-to-day life? What advice would you offer someone struggling with asthma about overcoming health-related challenges to still find fulfillment and purpose?

A: Remember that everyone around you is probably dealing with *something*. Whether that's something that you can see, or something that you know about, everyone has challenges.

I always looked at my asthma as a good excuse to stay healthier. Whether that was avoiding the pressure to be around/use tobacco products, or making sure I am active in a safe way to preserve the lung function I do have, asthma has helped remind me that staying healthy is important. Maintaining a healthy weight, eating as healthy as I can (while still enjoying food), and doing the activities I enjoy have helped keep my asthma under control by reducing my stress levels too!

Asthma treatment has come a very long way, even during my lifetime (about 30 years), and there are many great treatment options out there. Be sure to be in contact with your pulmonologist if you are having chronic asthma flare-ups, and understand that what may have worked for you at one point may not always work. That doesn't mean you have to suffer everyday. It just means you have to try something different.

To ask Alia a question about living with asthma, email anna.carrigan@dhhs.nh.gov

Collaborative Member Updates

Breathe NH is hosting its annual Legislative Breakfast on March 15, 2018 from 8-9:30 at the State House. Contact Kim Coronis at KCoronis@breathenh.org with questions, or to RSVP.

Breathe NH is hosting a free presentation regarding the latest research on vaping and lung health. It will be held on March 22, 2018 from 5:30-7:00 in Manchester, and will feature a panel of experts, including those from the Tobacco Cessation program. To RSVP or for more information, email info@breathenh.org.

The Healthy Homes Steering Committee will meet next on April 11, 2018 from 2-3:30 at 29 Hazen Dr. in Concord. Please email anna.carrigan@dhhs.nh.gov to RSVP.

The Lead and Asthma Control Programs are hosting a pediatric medical education dinner on April 18, 2018 from 4:45-8:00 at the former Center of NH in Manchester. Free nursing and physician CEUs are offered, but registration is required. Email anna.carrigan@dhhs.nh.gov for more information on the presentations. To register, click [here](#). To exhibit, please see the information on page 3 [here](#). Contact Jodie Wisherd at 603-573-3356 or Jodie_wisherd@jsi.com.



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Asthma Control Program
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