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your  
community  
breathe  
easy.

# Asthma Screening Event Planning Guide



American  
**College**  
of Allergy, Asthma  
& Immunology

Find an  
**allergist**  
Find *relief*





Asthma screening programs are an important part in raising awareness about asthma, allergies and EIB and the role allergists play in treatment of these diseases. Screenings help identify suspected asthma, nasal allergy and EIB sufferers and refer them to allergists for diagnosis and treatment.

This manual provides step-by-step guidance on how to plan, organize and publicize your screening program.

## Planning

The timing of your screening is up to you. Many allergists choose to have an event in May, which is National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month. Other allergists host a screening in the fall, as back-to-school and changing weather conditions often bring suffering to allergy and asthma patients. Screenings can be held at any time of the year.

You might consider working with others to plan your screening, including:

- **Other allergists and physicians**

- ◆ Other allergists can help plan the event, attend the event, conduct screenings and be included on the list of allergist referrals for patients. If you work at a larger practice, several allergists from your group can help plan and attend the event.

- ◆ The College recommends at least one other allergist/physician in addition to the allergist planning the event to be on site to conduct screenings.
- ◆ To secure physician volunteers, send allergists you know an email or call them to explain what the screening is, why it is important to host a screening and ask if they would be interested in helping to plan it and/or attend. Also note if they help with the screening, they will be added to the list of referrals available at the screening.
- **Allied health professionals** such as physician assistants, nurse practitioners, school nurses, respiratory therapists and pharmacists

- ♦ Allied health professionals can help plan the event and perform some functions on site, such as welcoming participants and facilitating registration. NPs/PAs at your practice would be excellent volunteers to perform the screening or may know of others who might volunteer.
- ♦ To secure additional NP/PA volunteers, send them an email or call them to explain what the screening is, why it is important to host a screening and ask if they would be interested in helping to plan it and/or attend.
- ♦ Ask if they will help promote it by hanging flyers in their offices, promote on their practice website and on social media.
- **Patient support groups**, such as the [Allergy & Asthma Network \(AAN\)](#) and the [Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America \(AAFA\)](#).
  - ♦ AAN – contact AAN via its online [contact form](#) or at 800-878-4403 to request info you can display at the screening and potentially secure AAN volunteers to help at your screening.
  - ♦ AAFA – This organization may be able to provide information about its asthma and allergy patient education and family support resources to distribute at your screening. Call the national headquarters at 800-727-8462 or email [info@aafa.org](mailto:info@aafa.org).

### Suggested Planning Timeline:

Timeframe	Activity
8 weeks before screening	Select the dates, site and recruit other HCPs to help plan and attend the screening.
6 weeks before screening	Walk through the screening site to determine set up. Order screening program equipment.
4 weeks before screening	Create a flyer to promote the screening. Have them printed and also send the PDF to other HCPs to help promote it.
2 weeks before screening	Secure screening program equipment. Confirm details with HCPs who will be on site. Hang or distribute flyers.
1 week before screening	Send a reminder to HCPs who will be on site. Prepare allergist referral list to hand out.
After screening	Send emails or make calls to thank volunteers. Call or email the manager/ your contact at the site to thank them.

### Selecting a screening site

Choose a site where you will get good foot traffic. Screening sites can include:

- local health fairs
- shopping malls
- grocery/discount/drug stores
- sporting events (good opportunity to screen for EIB, see the EIB section in this guide)
- farmers markets
- workplaces
- libraries
- local YMCAs or community centers

Avoid holding a screening at your practice. A screening program held in a private office or clinic may appear as self-promotion for an individual allergist. The screening program is intended to be a public service.

Asthma rates are among the highest for Black people. Hispanic people also suffer from asthma at higher rates. Consider hosting an asthma screening in an underserved area or reaching out to people of color in your community to promote your asthma screening. Registration forms are available in Spanish.

Before selecting a site, consider the following:

- Do you need a permit to conduct the screening?
- Is there a rental fee? If so, can it be waived because the screening would be a public service?
- Is there electricity for spirometers?
- Does the site allow you to hang up flyers to promote the event?
- If outside, would the screening be under a covered site or would you be able to bring a small, free-standing canopy?
- If the screening will be more than one day, is there a secure place to store your supplies and equipment?
- Do you need liability insurance? The majority of sites should not require special liability insurance.

If you've found a potential site, contact the store manager, park district staff, or entity that is hosting the health fair and inquire about conducting a screening. Be prepared to convey the importance of screening for asthma as a community health benefit. You may need to confirm the answers to some of the questions above with the store or event management.

Once the event is confirmed, planning can begin for equipment, publicity and more.

### Website/Phone number

Designate an email address, website or practice Facebook page and phone number that interested participants can use to get more information. If you choose to promote it on your practice website and/or Facebook page, make sure to update your site to include screening event information. Also designate a staff member who will take calls or answer emails from interested participants.

### Supply check list

- ☐ Registration and report forms - there are forms for adults, kids ages 8 - 14 and kids 7 and younger. There are registration forms in Spanish too.
- ☐ Flyers and other informational materials.
- ☐ Children's activity sheet, crayons or colored pencils.
- ☐ Spirometers - Bring equipment from your office or check with local hospitals, clinics or vendors to see if you can borrow machines.

- ☐ Disposable mouthpieces for spirometers.
- ☐ Tables and chairs, if not provided by site, and table cloths or skirts.
- ☐ Office supplies such as clipboards, pens, scissors, paper clips, duct tape, trash can, extension cord or power strip.
- ☐ Tissues.
- ☐ Disinfecting wipes for hands.

### Screening materials

#### Asthma and allergy screening program

**registration forms** - Bring many copies of the registration forms.

[Registration Form - ages 7 and younger](#)

[Registration Form - ages 8-14](#)

[Registration Form - ages 15 and older](#)

[Registration Form in Spanish - ages 7 and younger](#)

[Registration Form in Spanish - ages 8-14](#)

[Registration Form in Spanish - ages 15 and older](#)

### Using the registration forms:

- Each person participating must complete the registration form and sign the release section before being screened by an allergist.
- Page 1 of the form gathers demographical information and serves as a release form to be signed by the individual being screened. If the participant is under the age of 18, the release section of the form should be signed by a parent or guardian. The registration form also includes a photo waiver that gives permission for the allergist hosting the screening to take and use photos from the screening.
- Page 2 is a questionnaire that asks participants about their breathing problems or asthma and allergies. There are three versions of Page 2, each targeted to a different age group: adults 15 and over, kids 8-14, and children 7 and younger.
- Each participating allergist must complete the last section of the registration form that indicates the number of "yes" responses, the referral recommendation and physician signature. After the screening, give the completed form to the person who was screened.



**Allergy information from the College** - The College has a variety of information on asthma and allergic conditions. Print the fact sheets and have them available as handouts. Find the fact sheets in the [College's Marketing and Patient Materials Toolkit](#).

## At the Screening

On the day of the event, the screening process typically has these steps:

- **Greeting and registration.** Volunteers at the registration table welcome each participant to the screening and provide the appropriate registration forms on a clipboard. Participants will bring the completed form to the allergist for review.
- **Public education materials.** While waiting to be screened, participants should be offered public education materials on asthma, allergies and EIB. The coloring activities can be provided to children who are waiting to be screened.
- **Screening.** The registration form serves as a basis for the screening of each participant. The form, in combination with a discussion of the participant's symptoms and spirometer results, can help the allergist decide whether to refer the participant for a professional diagnosis for asthma, nasal allergies or EIB.
- **Spirometer test.** Spirometry is a recommended, but optional, test.
- **Referral.** All participants with suspected asthma, allergies or EIB should be encouraged to schedule a follow-up examination. You may provide the list of allergists in the area to these participants. You also can refer people to the [ACAAI public website](#) and recommend the Find an Allergist search. Allergist staff members should not distribute their business cards or suggest themselves as the physician of choice.
- **Public assistance programs.** Information about sources of care for indigent or medically indigent

### Children's activity sheet -

To keep kids busy, consider having activity/coloring sheets for children. Make sure you have crayons or colored pencils available.



individuals should be available and provided to referred participants who are uninsured or unable to be private-pay patients.

- **Concluding the screening.** After the screening is completed, the allergist should complete the screener portion of the form at the bottom of page 2, and make sure the participant has answered all the questions and signed the form.

### Screenings for Exercise-Induced Bronchoconstriction (EIB)

Consider conducting a screening for EIB, since an estimated 80-90% of Americans with asthma have EIB. In addition, 10% of the general population without asthma has EIB. Some people may have heard of "exercise-induced asthma" or those with asthma probably know if exercise is one of their triggers. Others, though, may not realize they may be at risk for EIB or that it's possible to have the condition with or without asthma.

Screenings for EIB might be especially effective at events like marathons, 5K races or sports tournaments. Other places for EIB screenings include fitness centers, YMCAs, park districts, recreational sporting leagues and youth sports programs.

Once you've found a potential site, contact the entity hosting the event or the health club/park district management and inquire about conducting a screening. Be prepared to convey the importance of screening for EIB as a community health benefit.

Follow the same timelines, supply list, screening materials and publicity for an EIB screening as listed above for an asthma screening.



## Publicity

Media outlets, particularly online media outlets, offer opportunities to reach large audiences with information about asthma and allergies. You can use media of all types, including social media, to position allergists as medical specialists who treat allergic conditions. Most outlets can be reached

via social media channels as opposed to calling or emailing editors. If you have a personal relationship with a news editor or reporter, a phone call or email is still a good route for outreach. Publicity also plays an important role in drawing attendance to screening programs.

### Suggested Publicity Timeline

Timeframe	Activity
4 weeks before screening	Contact local businesses, schools, community groups, houses of worship about including the screening in their newsletters.
3 weeks before screening	Contact a TV/radio station about a PSA.
2 weeks before screening	Submit a news release.
1 week before screening	Start posting on social media.
1 to 2 days before screening	Additional social media posts.

Each year the College distributes a [news release](#) to national media across the country in advance of National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month in May. You are welcome to use our release with your practice information added or edit the release and make it your own.

Local outreach to media in your area is particularly important to promote your event to anyone who believes they may be suffering from asthma. That includes:

- Daily newspapers and e-news sites (example: Patch.com)
- Weekly community newspapers and e-news sites
- Television stations, including news, talk and community affairs programs
- Radio stations, also including news, talk and community affairs programs
- Community and civic web sites that are visited by people in your area
- Community and neighborhood social media groups

Community news outlets are usually in search of events such as asthma screenings which can be promoted to their audiences.



Additional publications to consider include employee and member newsletters published by area businesses, industries, allied health professionals, schools, houses of worship and community groups.

### Social Media Outreach

Post an item on the date and location of your screening program on your practice and personal Facebook and Twitter accounts (and ask your staff to do the same). You can ask the people you interact with on these sites to spread the word to others in their network.

### News Releases

A short news release prior to the event is a good way to get the word out. You can announce the details of your screening program, along with information on why it's important for those with asthma to get symptoms under control. Do some research to find local journalists who cover health issues and consider sending it to them directly. A [sample news release](#) is provided for you to customize.

### Public Service Announcements

Public service announcements (PSAs) are brief messages – 10 to 30 seconds – of community

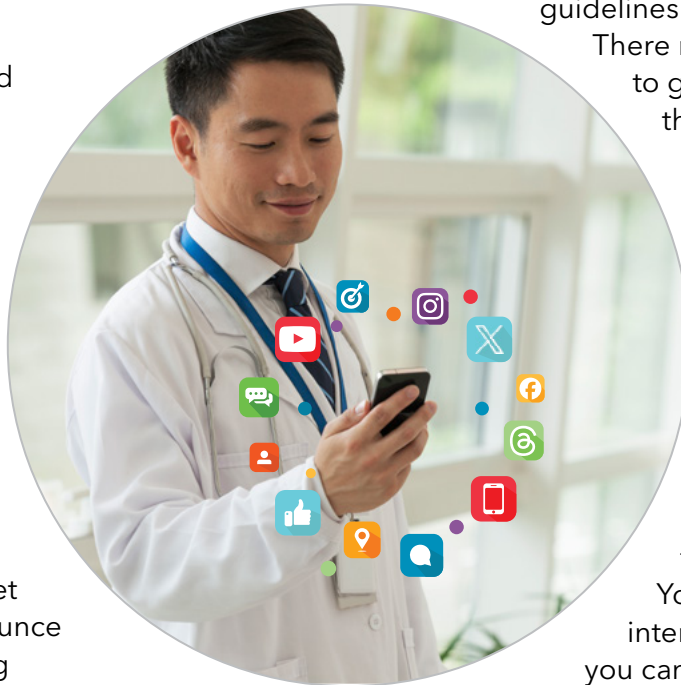
interest. Television and radio stations donate airtime for these announcements based on the public service value and quality. Contact your local TV and radio stations to find out who oversees PSAs, and reach out to find out what their guidelines are for submitting an event.

There may be a longer lead time to get your PSA on the air than there is for placing a news item.

### Using Photos

You can only use photos of those people who have signed the photo waiver on their registration forms. Post your photos on your website or include them in your practice newsletter to showcase your screening. Your local media might be interested in a photograph, and you can send one along with the news release that provides a summary on the results of your program. When you send the media a photo, include a caption that provides the names of those pictured and describes the event.

Quite often, feature reporters like to be participants in their stories. Don't hesitate to invite a reporter to be screened for asthma, nasal allergies or EIB.



## Screening Program Message Points for Interviews

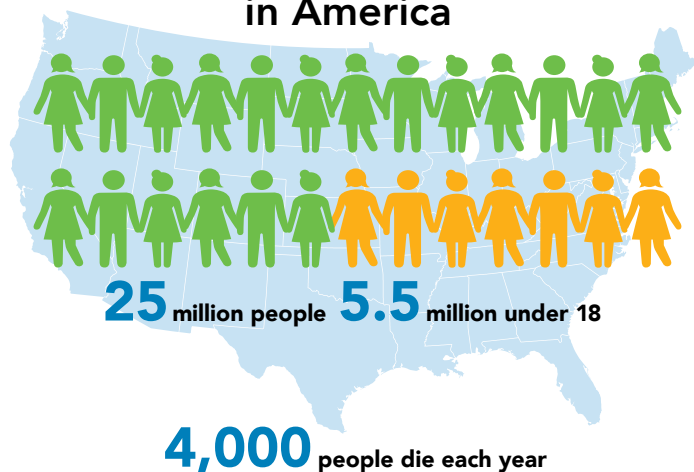
### Key Points

- Allergies and asthma are serious diseases. Misdiagnosis and inappropriate treatment can be dangerous.
- Anyone with allergies and asthma should be able to feel good, be active all day and sleep well at night. No one should accept less.
- During a screening, adults and children answer questions about their symptoms, take a lung function test that involves blowing into a tube and meet with an allergist to determine if they should be referred for a complete diagnosis.
- Board-certified allergists are uniquely qualified to perform allergy testing and treat allergic diseases effectively. Allergists:
  - ◆ Treat more than just symptoms.
  - ◆ Can identify the source of your suffering and develop a treatment plan to eliminate symptoms.
  - ◆ Provide you with the most cost-effective care and best outcomes.
  - ◆ Visit [acaai.org](http://acaai.org) for more information and tools to use.

## Asthma Facts

- Asthma is a chronic inflammation of the lung airways that causes coughing, chest tightness, wheezing or shortness of breath.

### Asthma prevalence in America



- About 25 million Americans have asthma; 5.5 million are under 18.
- Asthma mortality is more than 4,000 deaths per year.
- Patients with asthma reported 5.8 million visits to a doctor's office.
- Asthma results in 182,000 hospitalizations and 1.5 million emergency room visits annually.
- Asthma is the most common chronic illness in childhood, accounting for 13.8 million missed school days each year. It also accounts for 14.2 million lost work days for adults.
- The estimated economic cost of asthma in the United States is more than \$80 billion annually in medical expenses, missed work and school days and deaths.
- Asthma rates are highest among Black people and Puerto Ricans, boys ages 4 and younger, women older than 25 and people living in poverty.
- Triggers that can initiate an asthma attack include allergens such as pollen, dust, animal dander, drugs, and food additives, as well as viral respiratory infections and physical exertion.
- Asthma is often hereditary.
- Weather conditions such as extremely dry, wet, or windy weather can worsen an asthma condition.
- Effective asthma treatment includes monitoring the disease with a peak flow meter, identifying and avoiding allergen triggers, using drug therapies including bronchodilators and anti-inflammatory agents, and developing an emergency plan for severe attacks.
- There are two types of asthma medications: long-term control and quick-relief medications. Long-term control medications are preventive, taken daily to achieve and maintain control of asthma symptoms. Quick-relief medications are used to treat asthma attacks. They relieve symptoms rapidly and are taken on an as-needed basis.
- One of the most effective medications for controlling asthma is inhaled corticosteroids, which are anti-inflammatory medications. Taken early and as directed, these well-tolerated and safe medications can improve asthma control and normalize lung function.
- Immunotherapy or allergy shots should be considered if asthma is triggered by exposure to unavoidable allergens, or if symptoms occur three days a week and more than two nights a month. The shots are especially helpful when symptoms occur year-round or are not easily controlled with medication.
- Biologics are also an effective treatment for patients with moderate to severe asthma.
- Allergists are the medical specialists with the most expertise in treating asthma. An allergist can find the source of your suffering and stop it. To find an allergist, visit [acaai.org/find-an-allergist/](https://acaai.org/find-an-allergist/).



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