



# Don't Fall Behind!

## Breathe easy at home program

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### Seasonal influenza & H1N1 (Swine Flu)

#### Preventing influenza is important for people with asthma!

Adults and children with asthma are at higher risk for serious illness from the seasonal flu and the 2009 H1N1 (swine flu) virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reviewed hospitalization data from the spring flu outbreak and found that 32% of people hospitalized due to 2009 H1N1 flu had a diagnosis of asthma. Asthma occurs in about 8% of the U.S. population.\*

Boston's review of hospitalization data during that same time period also showed that a disproportionate number of residents with asthma were hospitalized as a result of 2009 H1N1 flu. Of the 71 Boston residents hospitalized for 2009 H1N1 flu, 49% had a diagnosis of asthma. In addition, Boston's Black and Latino residents – communities with the highest rates of asthma -- had the highest numbers of confirmed 2009 H1N1 flu cases. And although Boston accounts for only 10% of the Massachusetts population, 32% of the confirmed 2009 H1N1 cases occurred among Boston residents.\*\*



*The best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get a seasonal flu vaccination each year.*

Seasonal influenza vaccine is still available and there are limited amounts of 2009 H1N1 vaccines available for high-risk populations. As of our publication date, the seasonal flu is not yet spreading widely in Massachusetts, and 2009 H1N1 flu could continue to spread into the winter and spring. Therefore, there is still a time to vaccinate your patients with asthma.

The 2009 H1N1 vaccine is currently being targeted to the following populations; 1) pregnant women, 2) household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 mos. of age, 3) health and EMS personnel, 4) young people from age 6 mos. through 24 years of age, and 5) people aged 25 through 64 who have chronic health conditions that put them at high-risk for complications from the flu. This means that

whether your asthma patients are pediatric or adult, they are a priority for H1N1 vaccination.

**The Boston Public Health Commission has up to date information, educational materials and videos in multiple languages and information on vaccine clinics at**

**[www.bphc.org/flu](http://www.bphc.org/flu).** The Centers for Disease Control has materials for clinicians at [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/asthma\\_clinicians.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/asthma_clinicians.htm).

\* <http://www3.niaid.nih.gov/news/QA/H1N1/VacASTHMAq.htm>

\*\* <http://www.bphc.org/flu> (under Flu Summit)

#### Inside this issue

- H1N1 and Seasonal Influenza Facts
- BEAH patient evaluation
- New Breathe Easy material!
- Heating Assistance

**TWO COMMUNITIES ARE ADOPTING BREATHE EASY AT HOME, AND BOSTON IS PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.**

Rhode Island Department of Health is piloting BEAH with two of their local health departments. The Multnomah County Health Department, in Oregon, just sent the person who will be their BEAH program coordinator to Boston, to spend a day learning about the program. We will report on highlights from that visit in the next issue.



EXCEPTIONAL CARE. WITHOUT EXCEPTION.



# New Breathe Easy at Home materials!

The Breathe Easy at Home Steering Committee identifies a need for a document for referring clinicians. As a result, the Medical Legal Partnership | Boston (MLP | Boston) at Boston Medical Center contributed this article.

The MLP | Boston created a flyer to support health care providers in educating undocumented patients who are worried about serious and unresolved housing conditions problems, but are afraid to contact BEAH because of potential landlord retaliation that could lead to deportation. With input from the Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), the new flyer seeks to make sure providers and their patients are making fully informed decisions about the risks and benefits of participating in the BEAH program, highlighting key considerations such as:

- the infrequency of reported follow through on landlord threats
- the legal right of all tenants to equal enforcement of the sanitary code regardless of immigration status
- why it can be against a landlord's interest to report undocumented tenants to immigration authorities

These factors must always be weighed against the severity of the risk of immigration enforcement action for undocumented tenants, even if the likelihood is low. Only an individual patient has the ability to assess – based on their household's unique circumstances – whether the risk of immigration enforcement is greater than the risks of unhealthy housing. However, some patients are making decisions not to contact BEAH without having the information that will be shared in the brochure. Armed with this new information, patients will be able to determine the best strategy to address current health hazards in their rental housing, against the backdrop of immigration status concerns. The brochure will be available soon with all BEAH resources under "Resources for Providers."



## Patient Evaluation Complete!

Our client evaluation is complete! Breathe Easy at Home surveyed 30 consecutive clients beginning in June of 2008 to find out how well Breathe Easy is improving or eliminating in-home violations as well as how often asthma symptoms improve. We conducted preliminary and follow-up surveys.

Initial findings tell us that Breathe Easy's priority neighborhoods are being served..We found 30% of cases in Dorchester, 13% in the South End, and 10% in Roxbury, East and South Boston. Similarly, priority violations are being addressed. Both rodent and roach infestations occur in 50% of cases and mold/moisture/mildew occur in 36% of

cases. We are also noting a broader range of asthma triggers being addressed such as ventilation, gaps/holes, dusty fans/dirty ducts/not weather tight windows or doors and dirty furnace filters.

More data is coming soon to link asthma data with satisfaction data!



Be advised! The heating season began on September 16! Property owners are required to heat all habitable spaces from 68 degrees Fahrenheit no exceeding 78 degrees until June 14.

## Heating Requirement Reminders

- **Rental Housing Resource Center** 617-RENT (7368)
  - **Inspectional Services Department** 617-635-5322
  - **United Way Boston** 1-800-231-4377
  - **Heat Works Program** 617-635-0338
  - **24 Hour Services** 617 635-4500
  - **Elderly Commission** 617-635-4366
  - **Consumer Affairs** 617-635-3834
  - **The Salvation Army's Good Neighbor Energy Fund** 1-800-334-3047
  - **Citizens Energy** 1-877-JOE-4OIL (1-877-563-4645)
- ABCD Fuel Assistance** helps more than 15,000 low-income households in Boston, Brookline and Newton pay fuel bills during the heating season. This program can also provide assistance to client whose heat is included in their rent. Applications are taken from November through March at ABCD's Central Office or at any of ABCD neighborhood sites.
- \*\*\*For more information, call **617.357.6012**.