A new approach to asthma treatment

Helping parents and children take control

An asthma attack can be terrifying for both parents and children. During an attack, a child has difficulty breathing and may wheeze or cough. At its most severe stage, breathing is hard and fast and can be so strained that the outline of the child’s ribs may show as he or she struggles for air. A child’s lips or fingernails may even appear gray or blue. Breathing problems can make it difficult for a child to talk, walk, eat or play—but they make it easy for a child to feel scared.

Pediatricians at Children’s Hospital at Dartmouth (CHaD), an outpatient pediatric practice located at Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth-Hitchcock Keene, have implemented new clinical guidelines aimed at helping parents and children control asthma. With the...
The goal: to reduce asthma-related sick days, emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

A PATIENT-FRIENDLY PLAN

Keene-area families will notice a few differences in their care when they come in for an asthma visit or a well-child checkup. The family will receive a phone call before their appointment from one of our Care Coordinator Registered Nurses, who will ask questions about the child’s asthma and remind them to bring in his or her medicines and asthma supplies. Families will be asked to fill out an Asthma Control Test at each visit to assess how well the child’s asthma is managed. Families may also be sent home with a self-monitoring tool called a peak flow meter to track the values at home for two weeks. Then they’ll receive a call from our office to set up a plan of action to control the child’s asthma even better.

“Our office staff is working very hard to help our asthma patients receive the best evidence-based care possible. We have appreciated families’ participation in our new efforts and hope to help children who have asthma live active, symptom-free lives,” says Gerri Rubin, M.D., a pediatrician in Keene.

A FOUR-PRONGED APPROACH

A clinical guideline is a standardized approach for assessing and treating asthma. Guidelines are based on approaches that have been proven to be most successful through research or clinical practice. CHaD pediatricians at all Dartmouth-Hitchcock locations will follow these new guidelines.

1. **Assessment and monitoring.** CHaD pediatricians use multiple measures of the patient’s level of current impairment (frequency and intensity of symptoms, lung function and limitations of daily activities) and try to measure the future risk of asthma complications.

2. **Patient education.** CHaD pediatricians teach patients to self-monitor and manage asthma with a written asthma action plan, which includes instructions for daily treatment and information to recognize and handle worsening asthma.

3. **Control of environmental factors and other conditions that can affect asthma.** CHaD pediatricians and nurses work with families to limit children’s exposure to allergens, pets and other substances that can worsen asthma, such as cigarette smoke, pollen or dust. Doctors also evaluate the impact of conditions that may be connected to asthma, such as rhinitis, sinusitis, gastroesophageal reflux or obesity. In addition, the guidelines aim to prevent problems by prescribing yearly flu shots.

4. **Medications.** To control asthma, the clinical guidelines use a stepwise approach in which medication doses or types are stepped up as needed and stepped down when possible. Treatment is adjusted based on the level of asthma control.

The guidelines allow pediatricians, nurses and allergists to work together to offer parents and children greater support for asthma care. The treatment team uses the same checklist to make sure that symptoms are checked every visit, medications are reviewed every six to 12 months and the asthma care plan is updated every year.

Health news you can really use

To get the latest health news, advice and information about Cheshire Medical Center (CMC) delivered to your inbox, visit cheshiremed.org today and sign up for the Health Monthly e-healthflash from CMC.
Preparing for a little bundle of joy comes with a bundle of questions and choices—all of which can be answered and accommodated by the family-centered birthing team at Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth-Hitchcock Keene (CMC/DHK). It’s a collaborative practice of board-certified obstetricians, certified nurse-midwives, nurses, volunteer doulas and staff, who provide the right care for every patient, every time.

“We’re a group of healthcare professionals with a philosophical emphasis on the normalcy of pregnancy, labor and delivery, as well as the skill and expertise to provide whatever care is necessary to ensure a safe and healthy outcome for mother and baby,” explains Julie Tucker, R.N.-C., Director of OB services at CMC/DHK.

Combining physical and psychosocial needs has led to the development of programs and approaches that help manage all that comes with pregnancy, delivery and the postpartum experience. The birthing experience at CMC/DHK is as individual as the mother herself, and it all begins with prenatal care.

**CENTERING PREGNANCY**

“Centering” is an innovative prenatal care program that emphasizes self-awareness, education and support within a group setting and encourages women to take control of their pregnancies and their bodies.

Women who are at similar stages of pregnancy join group discussions and receive routine screenings such as blood pressure and weight checks. After the medical segment, the meeting can go wherever the group takes it through their discussions.

“Centering builds upon the already strong foundation of midwifery care at CMC/DHK,” says OB/GYN Department Chair Timothy Fisher, M.D. “Centering emphasizes personal involvement in a woman’s care and accountability for her wellness during pregnancy.”

**PREGNANCY WELLNESS PROGRAM**

So many areas of a woman’s life are affected by pregnancy and parenthood. The Pregnancy Wellness Program at CMC/DHK establishes a plan to optimize the entire experience. It brings together aspects of a woman’s life to establish a strong, positive foundation. The program helps women clarify birthing expectations, organize a support team and learn relaxation techniques for pregnancy and the postpartum period.

As a member of our care team, clinical psychologist Amanda Houle, Psy.D., supports the philosophy of a mind/body approach to prenatal care. Helping women see how different habits, emotions and behaviors influence...
prenatal wellness, she provides support and self-management strategies to address the psychoemotional challenges that are common during pregnancy, labor, delivery and the postpartum period. Her methods may incorporate relaxation training, meditation, birth planning and “kinder thinking” therapies. She is actively involved in early identification and treatment of women at risk for postpartum depression and other common emotional and often undiagnosed problems.

FREE CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION

Care and support can come in many forms, such as free childbirth-education classes to help moms-to-be successfully navigate pregnancy and childbirth. Families also benefit from refresher classes, classes for teens, prenatal yoga and aquatics, a class “Just for Dads” and even postpartum classes to help women adjust to life with a newborn.

DOULA SERVICES

Support can also come from a volunteer doula. A doula is trained to provide nonmedical support to a birthing woman and her support team during labor and delivery. Available for free to CMC/DHK birthing mothers, doulas are ready with encouragement, information and techniques to help keep mothers comfortable.

Whitney Lawton-Linnenbringer, a labor and delivery nurse at CMC/DHK, delivered both of her sons, Alexander and James, at the hospital and knows first-hand how a doula can enhance the experience. Speaking about her son James’s birth last year, she says: “My doula, Marilyn, was there to coach me and provide support to my husband, Frank. I wasn’t sure how he’d do, but she coached us together and individually so I didn’t have to worry.”

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Planned giving at CMC/DHK

Why consider a planned gift?

Tax season usually involves a visit to an accountant. As you discuss ways to achieve tax savings, consider a planned gift to a nonprofit organization. A planned gift can be an outright or a future charitable gift made from many different kinds of assets. It can be made at any time and can be aligned with existing tax, estate and financial plans.

Depending on your objectives, a planned gift has the potential to offer tax savings, income for life or a vehicle for transferring wealth to heirs, while at the same time benefiting Cheshire Health Foundation (CHF), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to advancing the quality and sophistication of services at Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth-Hitchcock Keene (CMC/DHK).

REALIZE TAX BENEFITS NOW FOR FUTURE GIFTS

CHF’s planned giving program may allow you to:

- take immediate tax deductions for future charitable donations
- make gifts directly from retirement accounts without having the funds subject to income or estate taxes
- transfer wealth to heirs without obligations for inheritance or gift taxes
- donate appreciated securities without having their value decreased by capital gains taxes
- earn a guaranteed income for the rest of your life from a charitable gift
- plan a deferred income for yourself or spouse
- provide long-term income for family members
- give CHF interest income on a future gift to heirs

HOW TO GIVE

CHF can accept a range of assets for your planned gift:

- cash
- securities
- retirement accounts or benefit plans
- life insurance
- real estate
- personal property

In addition, CHF has a range of planned gift vehicles to choose from:

- Bequests. Name CHF in your will for a percentage or share of the residue.
- Charitable gift annuities. Make a charitable gift with tax deductions to CHF from which one or two lives can earn a supplemental, fixed income for life.
- Retirement or insurance plans. Name CHF as the beneficiary.
- Securities. Contribute appreciated stock or other securities to CHF without capital gains obligations.
- Trusts. Work with tax, estate or financial advisors to create a trust with tax savings that can benefit family members or CHF with income or a remainder.
- Endowment. Preserve a program or service with targeted support that recognizes your family name into the future.

Questions? Call us!

Contact the Development Office at CHF at (603) 354-6810 to discuss your goals and objectives. With any planned gift, we encourage you to also seek advice from tax, estate or financial advisors.
At Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth-Hitchcock Keene, we love what we do and know that it matters. We’re proud that we continue to draw the best of the best to our organization and to this community. Please join us in welcoming two new physicians.

Heidi Rinehart, M.D.
OBSTETRICS/GYNECOLOGY

When Heidi Rinehart, M.D., talks about her job as an OB/GYN in the Hubbard Center for Women’s Health at Cheshire Medical Center, you know she’s just where she is supposed to be. As she shares her thoughts about caring for women, she lights up and her voice fills with feeling. “Whether my patient is a young mother-to-be or a post-menopausal woman, I ask myself, ‘How can I promote better well-being?’ I want women to feel safe with me and share their concerns so I can provide them with the best care.”

Even as a child, Dr. Rinehart knew she wanted to work with women, and she envisioned one day living in New Hampshire. Her medical education and 20-year career of caring for women took her to New York, Connecticut, Missouri, Tennessee, Arizona and New Mexico before she arrived in Keene this past November. She came to Keene because she wanted a smaller practice that would allow her to take vacations with her husband and three children: Julianna, 16; Peter, 13; and Elena, 4. Dr. Rinehart loves reading, running, figure skating and yoga. “I love mountains. There’s something about ascending, getting to the top and then coming down that is so satisfying.”

Neil O’Regan, M.D.
OBSTETRICS/GYNECOLOGY

“I love seeing the joy on Mom and Dad’s faces when their baby is born,” says Neil O’Regan, M.D. “I love taking care of patients, finding out what’s going on in their lives and helping them. Delivering babies is incredibly rewarding.

“When my oldest son was born, that brought everything into perspective. From that point on it was all about my son—not about me,” he says.

Dr. O’Regan grew up in Somerville, Mass. He loved spending time at the beach and continues that tradition with his own five children: Mackenzie, 4; Michael, 6; Tommy, 11; Kelsea, 14; and 18-year-old Taylor, a freshman at Tufts.

Dr. O’Regan practiced for nine years at the Center for Women’s Health at Goodall Hospital in Sanford, Maine. He met his wife, Katie, in Sanford, and they married in 2002. He loves to travel, garden and enjoy nature.

> Come see us!

To make an appointment with Drs. Rinehart or O’Regan at the Hubbard Center for Women’s Health, call (603) 354-5400.
Once James was born, they had uninterrupted family bonding time. That’s when Marilyn’s doula responsibilities shifted to photographer, capturing the family’s first precious moments.

**PAIN MANAGEMENT**

While discomfort is a part of the natural birthing process, there are nonmedical and medical pain-relieving options offered at CMC/DHK. These include massage, water therapy, positioning changes, breathing, guided imagery, intrathecal analgesia and epidurals. We make it a priority to educate and support our patients so they can go through the birth process empowered to make informed decisions.

**POSTPARTUM SERVICES**

The connection between new mothers and the OB team doesn’t end when the baby is born. A number of postpartum programs are available, including fitness and sibling classes and support for breastfeeding mothers. Women experiencing significant emotional stress can continue to receive support through the Pregnancy Wellness Program.

**LACTATION SUPPORT**

CMC/DHK has one of the highest breastfeeding rates in the state. Five certified lactation consultants are available seven days a week for inpatient consultation and Monday to Friday for outpatient support at no cost. Additionally, the hospital offers a 24-hour lactation support phone service.

**OUR VISION**

“CMC/DHK has consistently supported programs for state-of-the-art and compassionate, family-centered care for women who birth here, recognizing the value this has for the well-being of our community,” says Elaine Prescott-Austin, R.N., a lactation consultant and longtime member of the obstetrical team.

CMC/DHK has a myriad of services, but the people who deliver those services really make the difference. “We have spent the past three years building the region’s strongest team of doctors, midwives, nurses and administrative leaders to support the principles of Vision 2020, which is to make ours the nation’s healthiest community by the year 2020,” says Dr. Fisher. “Like the patients we serve, we are dedicated members of the Cheshire County community who believe this is the best place to live, work and raise our families.”