What’s Happening in May?

The 2017 Employee Health Risk Assessments have been completed! Thank you to all employees for their participation and a big thank you to MCPH staff and EMS staff for working at the screenings.

Reminders:

- Make sure you turn in your LIFE program items to receive your vouchers. **All earned LIFE Points must be used for paid leave by June 30, 2017**

- Are You Just a Few LIFE Points Short? – Call Melissa at 349-2459 or email mleatherman@maconnc.org to learn how to earn those extra points!

- **Leave Request Forms** as well as other LIFE Program forms are located at: http://maconnc.org/LifeWellness.html

**Earn 5 LIFE Points ➔ Ladies Night Out:**
- Programs are hosted monthly by Angel Medical Center in partnership with Macon County Public Health. The **May 23rd** program topic for **Ladies Night Out** is **Physical Therapy**. First meeting is from 4 pm - 5 pm and the second meeting is from 6:30 - 7:30 pm. You will earn 5 LIFE points for attending any LNO event with a maximum of 15 points allowable. For more information regarding LNO, please contact Lyndsey at 349-2086 or email lhenderson@maconnc.org
Earn 5 LIFE Points ➔ Preventive Appointments:
- Remember you can turn in documentation for annual physicals, eye appointments, Pap smears, Mammograms, and Dental check-ups, Colonoscopy and PSA - earn 5 LIFE Points for each one!

Earn 10 LIFE Points ➔ Skin Cancer Screening
- Sign up for the free Skin Cancer Screening on Wednesday, May 31st. You will earn 10 LIFE points and they are good through June 2018. Call 349-2435 or email krowland@maconnc.org to register.

Earn 5 LIFE Points ➔ Relay for Life
- Participate by walking in the 2017 Relay for Life on May 19th and earn 5 LIFE Points. Make sure you stop by the Macon County Public Health booth at Relay and sign your name to receive your LIFE voucher.

May
Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month

Asthma and Allergy Month is held through the month of May to coincide with the peak season for asthma & allergy sufferers. People who suffer from asthma and allergies often experience noticeable physical symptoms during this month. This is a great time to educate yourself, friends, family and co-workers about asthma and allergies.

There is no cure for asthma and allergies, and many deaths are preventable with proper treatment and care. Ten people a day die from asthma. More than 50 million Americans have all types of allergies – pollen, skin, latex and more. The rate of allergies is climbing.

- Signs and Symptoms of Asthma & Allergies to be Aware of.
  Asthma symptoms include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, and tightness in the chest. Symptoms of allergies can vary in severity. Mild allergy symptoms include congestion, skin rash, and itchy watery eyes. Moderate symptoms include difficulty in breathing and itchiness.

  Severe asthma symptoms can begin with itching of the eyes and face, but soon progress to swelling, causing breathing difficulties, cramps, diarrhea, and vomiting. Confusion and dizziness are further symptoms of asthma.

  Below is information on asthma and allergies. Also visit www.aafa.org for more information.
Allergy Facts and Figures

An allergy is when your immune system reacts to a foreign substance, called an allergen. It could be something you eat, inhale into your lungs, inject into your body or touch. This reaction could cause coughing, sneezing, itchy eyes, a runny nose and a scratchy throat. In severe cases, it can cause rashes, hives, low blood pressure, breathing trouble, asthma attacks and even death.

There is no cure for allergies. You can manage allergies with prevention and treatment. More Americans than ever say they suffer from allergies. It is among the country’s most common, but overlooked, diseases.

How Many People Do Allergies Affect?

- Researchers think nasal allergies affect about 50 million people in the United States.
- Allergies are increasing. They affect as many as 30 percent of adults and 40 percent of children.¹
- Allergic disease, including asthma, is the fifth leading chronic disease in the U.S. in people of all ages. It is the third most common chronic disease in children under 18 years old.¹

How Many People Get Sick from Allergies?

- Allergic conditions are the most common health issues affecting children in the U.S.¹⁵
- In 2012, 11.1 million people were diagnosed with allergic rhinitis.²
- People visit the emergency room about 200,000 times each year because of food allergies. Almost 10,000 people stay in the hospital each year because of food allergies.¹⁶

How Many People Die from Allergies?

- The most common triggers for anaphylaxis, a life-threatening reaction, are medicines, food and insect stings.⁴ Medicines cause the most allergy related deaths.¹¹
- African-Americans and the elderly have the most deadly reactions to medicines, food or unknown allergens.⁵
- Deadly reactions from venom are higher in older white men.¹² Over the years, deadly drug reactions have increased a lot.¹²

What Are the Costs of Allergies?
• In 2010, Americans with nasal swelling spent about $17.5 billion on health costs. They have also lost more than 6 million work and school days and made 16 million visits to their doctor.\(^6\)
• Food allergies cost about $25 billion each year.\(^7\)

What Are Indoor and Outdoor Allergies?
Types of indoor and outdoor allergies include sinus swelling, seasonal and returning allergies, hay fever and nasal allergies. Many people with allergies often have more than one type of allergy. The most common indoor/outdoor allergy triggers are: tree, grass and weed pollen, mold spores, dust mites, cockroaches, and cat, dog and rodent dander.

• In 2012, 17.6 million adults and 6.6 million children had hay fever.\(^8\)
• Worldwide, allergic rhinitis affects between 10 percent and 30 percent of the population. In 2010, allergic rhinitis was diagnosed during 11.1 million doctor visits.\(^1\)
• In 2010, white children were more likely to have hay fever than African-American children.\(^1\)
• The same triggers for indoor/outdoor allergies also often cause eye allergies.

How Common Are Skin Allergies?
Skin allergies include skin inflammation, eczema, hives, chronic hives and contact allergies. Plants like poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac are the most common skin allergy triggers. But skin contact with cockroaches and dust mites, certain foods or latex may also cause skin allergy symptoms.

• In 2012, 8.8 million children had skin allergies.\(^2\)
• Children age 0-4 are most likely to have skin allergies.\(^2\)
• In 2010, African-American children in the U.S. were more likely to have skin allergies than white children.\(^1\)

How Common Are Food Allergies?
Children have food allergies more often than adults. Eight foods cause most food allergy reactions. They are milk, soy, eggs, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shellfish.

• Peanut is the most common allergen. Milk is second. Shellfish is third.\(^9\)
• In 2014, 4 million children in the US have food allergies.\(^8\)
• Also, 38.7 percent of food-allergic children have a history of severe reactions.\(^1\)
• In children with food allergies, 30.4 percent are allergic to multiple foods.\(^1\)

How Common Are Drug Allergies?
• Penicillin is the most common allergy trigger for those with drug allergies. Up to 10 percent of people report being allergic to this common antibiotic.\textsuperscript{11}
• Bad drug reactions may affect 10 percent of the world's population. These reactions affect up to 20 percent of all hospital patients.\textsuperscript{3}

**How Common Is Latex Allergy?**

• About 1 percent of people in the U.S. have a latex allergy.\textsuperscript{12}
• Health care workers are becoming more concerned about latex allergies. About 8-12 percent of health care workers will get a latex allergy.\textsuperscript{12}

**How Common Is Insect Allergy?**

People who have insect allergies are often allergic to bee and wasp stings and poisonous ant bites. Cockroaches and dust mites may also cause nasal or skin allergy symptoms.

• Insect sting allergies affect 5 percent of the population.\textsuperscript{13}
• At least 40 deaths occur each year in the United States due to insect sting reactions.\textsuperscript{14}

**Allergy Treatment**

Good allergy treatment is based on your medical history, the results of your allergy tests and how severe your symptoms are. It can include three treatment types: avoiding allergens, medicine options and/or immunotherapy (allergens given as a shot or placed under the tongue).

**How Do I Avoid Allergens?**

The best way to prevent allergy symptoms and limit your need for allergy medicine is to avoid your allergens as much as possible. This includes removing the source of allergens from your home and other places you spend time. You can also reduce your symptoms to airborne allergens by washing out your nose daily. You can do this by using a nasal saline rinse using a squeeze bottle or a Neti pot.

**What Medicines Can I Take for Allergies?**

Some people don't take allergy medicines because they don't think their symptoms are serious. They may say, “It's only my allergies.” This can result in painful problems such as sinus or ear infections. Don't take the risk. There are many safe prescription and over-the-counter medicines to relieve allergy symptoms. Here is a short list of allergy medicines:
- **Nasal corticosteroids** are nose sprays. They reduce swelling. Swelling causes a stuffy, runny and itchy nose. They are the most effective medicines for nasal allergies.

- **Antihistamines** block histamine, a trigger of allergic swelling. They can calm sneezing, itching, runny nose and hives. They come in pills, liquids, melting tablets or nose sprays. These treat seasonal and indoor allergies.

- **Mast cell stabilizers** keep your body from releasing histamine. This can help with itchy, watery eyes or an itchy, runny nose. They are available as eye drops or nose sprays.

- **Decongestants** reduce stuffiness by shrinking swollen membranes in the nose. But be careful. Using these sprays more than three days in a row may cause the swelling and stuffiness in your nose to get worse. This can happen even after you stop using the medicine. This reaction is a rebound reaction.

- **Corticosteroid creams or ointments** relieve itchiness and stop the spread of rashes. See your doctor if your rash does not go away after using this cream for a week. Corticosteroids are not the same as anabolic steroids used illegally by some athletes to build muscles.

- **Oral corticosteroids** may be prescribed to reduce swelling and stop severe allergic reactions. These medicines can cause serious side effects. Expect your doctor to carefully monitor you while taking it. Oral corticosteroids are not the same as anabolic steroids used illegally by some athletes to build muscles.

- **Epinephrine** (ep-uh-NEF-rin) comes in a pre-measured and self-injectable device. It is the most important medicine to give during a life-threatening anaphylaxis (severe allergic reaction). To work, you must get an epinephrine shot within minutes of the first sign of serious allergic reaction. It treats life-threatening allergic reactions to food, stinging insects, latex and drugs/medicines.

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**ALLERGIC EMERGENCY**

If you think you are having anaphylaxis, use your self-injectable epinephrine and call 911. Do not delay. Do not take antihistamines in place of epinephrine. Epinephrine is the most effective treatment for anaphylaxis.

Some over-the-counter cold medicines are a blend of different medicines. Many include aspirin or other NSAID. Aspirin can cause asthma attacks in some people. If you have asthma, talk to your doctor before taking over-the-counter allergy or cold medicines.

New prescription and over-the-counter medicines are approved from time to time. Be sure to discuss all of your medicines with your doctor.
What Immunotherapy Treatments Are Available?

Immunotherapy is a treatment option for some allergy patients. There are two common types of immunotherapy. They are allergy shots and sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT).

Allergy shots involve giving injections of allergens in an increasing dose over time. The person becomes progressively less sensitive to that allergen. Allergy shots can work well for some people with allergies to pollen, pets, dust, bees or other stinging insects, as well as asthma. Allergy shots do not usually work well for allergies to food, medicines, feathers, or for hives or eczema.

SLIT is another way to treat certain allergies without injections. Allergists give patients small doses of an allergen under the tongue. This exposure improves tolerance to the substance and reduces symptoms. SLIT is a fairly safe and effective for the treatment of nasal allergies and asthma. SLIT tablets are currently available for grass and ragweed. Talk to your allergist if you want to learn more about SLIT.

Researchers are studying possible treatments for certain food allergies. These include oral immunotherapy (OIT), SLIT and other methods. These studies are still experiments. They are not proven treatments. The studies are testing the safety and effectiveness of these treatments. Before you enroll in these types of studies, talk to your allergist about the risks and benefits.

What Causes or Triggers Asthma?

People with asthma have inflamed airways which are sensitive to things which may not bother other people. These things are "triggers."

Asthma triggers vary from person to person. Some people react to only a few while others react to many.

If you have asthma, it is important to keep track of the causes or triggers that you know provoke your asthma. Because the symptoms do not always occur right after exposure, this may take a bit of detective work. Delayed asthma episodes may occur depending on the type of trigger and how sensitive a person is to it.

The most common asthma triggers include:

**Allergies (Allergic Asthma)**

Substances that cause allergies (allergens) can trigger asthma. If you inhale something you are allergic to, you may experience asthma symptoms. It is best to avoid or limit contact with known allergens to decrease or prevent asthma episodes.

Common allergens that cause allergic asthma include:
Irritants in the Air

Irritants in the environment can also bring on an asthma episode. Although people are not allergic to these items, they can bother inflamed, sensitive airways:

- smoke from cigarettes
- air pollution such as smog, ozone, and others
- wood fires
- charcoal grills
- strong fumes, vapors, or odors (such as paint, gasoline, perfumes and scented soaps)
- dusts and particles in the air
- chemicals

Respiratory Illness

- colds
- flu (influenza)
- sore throats
- sinus infections
- pneumonia

Respiratory infections are the most common asthma trigger in children.

Exercise

Exercise and other activities that make you breathe harder can affect your asthma. Exercise—especially in cold air—is a frequent asthma trigger. Exercise-induced bronchoconstriction (EIB) is a form of asthma that is triggered by physical activity. It is also known as exercise-induced asthma (EIA). Symptoms may not appear until after several minutes of sustained exercise. (If symptoms appear sooner than this, it usually means you need to adjust your treatment.) With proper treatment, you do not need to limit your physical activity.

Learn more about Exercise-Induced Asthma.
Weather

Dry wind, cold air or sudden changes in weather can sometimes bring on an asthma episode.

Feeling and Expressing Strong Emotions

- anger
- fear
- excitement
- laughter
- yelling
- crying

When you feel strong emotions, your breathing changes – even if you don’t have asthma. It may cause wheezing or other asthma symptoms in someone with asthma.

Medicines

Some medicines can also trigger asthma:

- If you are sensitive to aspirin and NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs)
- If you take medicines known as beta blockers – they can also make asthma harder to control

Other Asthma Triggers

Other triggers to consider and discuss with your healthcare provider are:

- sulfites in food
- hormonal changes during the menstrual cycle
- other medical problems like reflux

Talk to your healthcare provider about your asthma and your triggers. Be sure to discuss any changes in your asthma management.