

# Health Safety

## City of Lockport Fire Department

### *ASTHMA AWARENESS*

**A**sthma is a chronic respiratory disease characterized by inflammation of the airways, and increased responsiveness to various stimuli commonly known as asthma triggers. More than 14.6 million Americans suffer from asthma, which is the sixth-ranking chronic condition in the United States. Between 1982 and 1994, the rate per thousand persons who had asthma rose from 34.8 to 56.1, an increase of 61.2%.

An asthma attack can become so severe that the person becomes breathless. As the attack continues, the victim becomes less and less able to breathe, and may have difficulty speaking in full sentences. The muscles in the chest and neck may become tight. Lips and fingernails may have a grayish or blue color. If this occurs, the following steps should be taken:

- ✓ Asthma medication should be **taken immediately**.
- ✓ Dial 911 for emergency medical help.



### Remember:

- ✓ Don't delay in accessing **medical care!**
- ✓ Take medications as directed, drink plenty of water, and avoid any precipitating factors.

### FACTS ABOUT ASTHMA

- Asthma usually occurs in episodes, but the underlying pathology is chronic. Asthmatic episodes are a series of events which result from the narrowing of a person's airway.
  - ➔ Swelling of the airway, tightening of the airway muscle or increased mucus secretion in the airway.
- Each of these changes contributes to a narrowing of the airway tube resulting in a "wheeze" often heard in people having an asthma attack.
- Two classes of medications are used to treat asthma:
  - ➔ Anti-inflammatory agents, which interrupt the development of bronchial inflammation and have a preventative action.
  - ➔ Bronchodilators, which help to widen or dilate the constricted airway during an acute attack.
- Asthma is characterized by excessive sensitivity of the lungs to various stimuli. These include:
  - ➔ Colds and respiratory infections; cigarette smoke; allergic reactions to pollen, mold, animal dander, feathers, dust, food; stress.
  - ➔ Indoor and outdoor pollutants, including ozone, strenuous activity, exposure to cold air or sudden changes in temperature.

### WHAT CAN LFD DO TO HELP?

In addition to the 17 paramedics and 6 Critical Care Technicians already trained in the use of the Asthma medication Albuterol, 5 more LFD personnel are enrolled in the Paramedic Training Program and will be trained to use this life-saving medication.