

BACK PAGES

Non-profits create program to empower young people who have asthma

The United States National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) and Hip Hop Public Health (HHPH) have collaborated to develop and launch a free multimedia collection called EMPOWER. Consisting of eight original songs, animated videos and printable educational materials, EMPOWER “aims to inspire young people with asthma to take charge of their health with evidence-based, self-management skills.”

A news release explained that “medical providers, community health workers, educators and others who work with young people can use the EMPOWER resources to increase awareness about the importance of asthma management and to spread an inspiring message of resilience and empowerment when living with asthma.”

The EMPOWER program

EMPOWER is an acronym of the key components the organizations and their asthma specialists consider critical to living with and managing asthma:

Environment: Understanding its role in asthma triggers

Medication: The importance of regular and correct usage

Plan: Crafting a strategy to manage and mitigate symptoms

Open communication: Building bridges with healthcare professionals and loved ones

Well-being: Prioritizing holistic health, both mental and physical

Extinguish: The need to eliminate cigarettes and e-cigarettes



The EMPOWER content, including this poster, can be downloaded for free by clicking [here](#).

Resilience: Cultivating the strength to face challenges head-on

Each 60-second track and animated music video focuses on one of these elements. The first video, *EMPOWER Roll Call*, and a downloadable poster for educational and healthcare settings are available now. The remaining seven tracks and videos will be released later in 2023. The EMPOWER content is accessible for free through Hip Hop Public Health’s Learning Studio at <https://www.hhph.org/work/learning-studio/empower>.

Providing education and support

HHPH is a non-profit organization founded by neurologist Dr.

Olajide Williams, MD, MS, Vice Dean of Community Health at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons (VP&S) and hip hop artist Doug E. Fresh. “As young people move into their teen and young adult years, with greater independence and responsibility, taking ownership of their asthma management is essential for their health and wellbeing,” said Lori Rose Benson, Hip Hop Public Health executive director and CEO.

NEEF was chartered by the US Congress in 1990 as a non-profit organization to complement the work of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). NEEF’s work focuses on kindergarten to grade 12 education, conservation

and health. The organization has a 20-year history of providing pediatric asthma training and resources to healthcare providers.

“The asthma aids created through our exciting partnership with HHPH add to our array of content,” said Christy Haas-Howard, MPH, RN, health program director at NEEF. “With the EMPOWER tools, providers will be able to offer culturally relevant asthma education to teens, as well as their crucial support network of friends and family, to help navigate the challenges of asthma.”

References

Content for this article was based on and excerpted from:

- NEEF and Hip Hop Public Health. Hip Hop and environmental nonprofits drop beats for asthma awareness and health education. August 30, 2023. <https://neefusa.org/news/hip-hop-and-environmental-nonprofits-drop-beats-asthma-awareness-and-health-education>.
- National Environmental Education Foundation. Asthma initiatives. https://neefusa.org/search?search_api_fulltext=asthma.

Need for food allergy awareness on college campuses in the US

Healio has reported that a poster presented at the 2023 American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) Annual Meeting described results of a study about food allergy awareness on college campuses in the United States.

“Previous research has shown that people with food allergies experience social events differently, causing exclusion, awkwardness and other feelings,” Kethan M. Bajaj, an undergraduate student at Northwest-

ern University, told *Healio*. “As a result, food allergy education and knowledge are essential to improving food allergy management on college campuses.”

Bajaj and a research team “distributed an online, cross-sectional survey to college students across the [United States]” according to *Healio*. “The survey was initially sent during the summer of 2021 then again during the summer of 2022. It asked questions about food allergy awareness on college campuses, food allergy knowledge and education, and the social impacts of food allergy.”

“Descriptive statistics were used to assess students’ understandings and experiences with food allergies and determine methods to improve college life for students with food allergies,” Bajaj said.

“The researchers collected responses from 193 students from 65 universities across the US with 38.3% of the respondents reporting they had a food allergy,” according to *Healio*, which also published the following results:

Among students with food allergies

- 82.9% attend events where food is present but choose not to eat
- 63.4% attend events where food is present but eat beforehand
- 75.6% feel like a burden on their friend group
- 68.3% feel awkward
- 40.9% feel a limited ability to bond with peers
- 28.2% experienced an allergic reaction in a campus dining hall since starting college
- 63.6% feel worried or anxious about living with roommates who consume allergens in the room
- 35.5% did not feel confident in their peers’ ability to use an epinephrine autoinjector

Among all respondents

- 79.8% wished they knew more about assisting someone during an allergic reaction
- 37.8% respondents were not confident in their own ability to administer epinephrine autoinjectors
- 58.6% would attend a training course in epinephrine autoinjectors
- 68.9% said increased food allergy awareness training for college students would improve life for students with food allergy on campuses
- 36.4% would be interested in being involved with a food allergy awareness organization on campus

A need to improve training

“These results demonstrate the need for increased epinephrine autoinjector training among the college population to improve safety for students with food allergies,” Bajaj commented. “Universities across the nation must take steps to improve food allergy awareness on campuses, whether that be in the form of training courses, awareness videos or other means,” he added.

As an example, Bajaj described the Northwestern University Spotlight food condition club. It has provided epinephrine autoinjector training sessions and painted pumpkins teal [at Halloween] to promote allergy awareness. The club also plans to host guest speakers who will address food allergy management for college students. “This should be an exciting opportunity for students,” he said, “to become more comfortable and know more about food allergies.”

Support for increasing education

The *Healio* article also included a perspective about Bajaj’s poster written by Melissa Engel, MA, a clinical psychology doctoral student at Emory University. She

observed the “most novel aspect of the poster was the reported support for improving food allergy education on college campuses. It is highly encouraging that most participants, including those with and without food allergy, expressed interest in attending an epinephrine autoinjector training course and learning more about assisting someone during an allergic reaction.”

Engel also shared several recommendations with *Healio* saying, “Colleges may wish to engage in campus-wide food allergy education initiatives. Simple, low-cost efforts could go a long way. For example, freshman orientation or health classes could include a module on anaphylaxis, as well as mandatory training in epinephrine administration.”

She also suggested “education efforts could [begin] earlier...preparing peers to recognize and treat anaphylaxis as early as the elementary, middle or high school years. Many health classes require training in first aid, CPR, choking and automated external defibrillator use. It would seem worthwhile to expand this to include anaphylaxis and epinephrine use.”

References

Content for this article was based on and excerpted from:

- Students report lack of food allergy awareness on college campuses. March 28, 2023. *Healio*. <https://www.healio.com/news/allergy-asthma/20230328/students-report-lack-of-food-allergy-awareness-on-college-campus>.
- Bajaj, Kethan M, Kanaley, Madeleine K, Bajaj, Pranav M, Auerbach, Julia A and Gupta, Ruchi S. Determining avenues to improve safety for college students with food allergy. Poster 311. Presented at AAAAI Annual Meeting, February 24-27, 2023, San Antonio, TX, US.