



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AAFA and MedicAlert Foundation
Announce a New Pact to Help Save Lives**

*Partnership raises awareness of asthma and anaphylaxis, and
provides new solutions for managing life-threatening conditions.*

Washington, DC — May 5, 2020

Over 65 million people in the United States live with asthma or allergies to food, drugs or other allergens. Tragically, 3,600 people die each year from asthma – deaths that are often preventable. COVID-19 poses additional danger to these populations. Two leading non-profits have joined forces to raise awareness and provide resources for living with these potentially life-threatening conditions: asthma and anaphylaxis.

To kick off National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) and MedicAlert Foundation are launching several initiatives to help people with asthma and allergies proactively manage their conditions.

“Despite advancements in research, medicine and public policy, these chronic conditions are still some of the most costly for individuals and society,” states Kenneth Mendez, AAFA’s CEO and president. “There’s no cure for asthma or allergies. But they can be managed in ways that help avoid the worst outcomes.”

Impacts of COVID-19

The foundations stress that now, more than ever, people with asthma and allergies must be vigilant and actively manage their condition. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people with asthma may be at a higher risk of severe illness and hospitalization if they contract COVID-19.

“Given the stress our health systems are under right now, people with asthma and allergies must be extra careful,” states Melanie Carver, AAFA’s Vice President of Community Health and Services. “The most important thing you can do is keep your asthma and allergies under control, so you avoid a trip to the ER.”

Both organizations will conduct awareness campaigns with practical advice for actively managing asthma or allergies, with a goal to reduce serious, life-threatening asthma attacks and allergic reactions. MedicAlert and AAFA will also collaborate on resources for patients and

families, including virtual events, to help asthma and allergy sufferers navigate the coronavirus pandemic.

ACT for Asthma and Allergy

AAFA and MedicAlert are asking people to address the challenges of asthma and allergies head-on by making a pact to **A.C.T.** for Asthma or Allergy. “A” refers to having an **action plan** for asthma or anaphylaxis. “C” reminds people to **carry** important medications, and to wear a medical ID to alert others of their condition. “T” calls for establishing **treatment** plans, both for ongoing therapies and emergency situations.

The action plan is so important that MedicAlert and AAFA are jointly developing an online asthma or anaphylaxis action plan that will be part of the MedicAlert member health profile. MedicAlert is tapping into AAFA’s expertise to build out this functionality. It will replicate the written action plan, which includes specific actions to take based on current symptoms. The online action plan will make it easier for people living with chronic allergy or asthma to have access to their vital information in an emergency.

“MedicAlert was founded in 1956 because of a near-fatal allergic reaction – so this is in our DNA,” said Josefina Jervis, President & COO of MedicAlert Foundation. “Having a personalized action plan that can be stored and accessed online is an important safety measure for people with asthma and allergies. In an emergency, MedicAlert will relay the action plan and other critical medical information to first responders to ensure fast and accurate treatment. Someone having an asthma attack or anaphylactic reaction may not be able to talk; MedicAlert can be their voice.”

AAFA and MedicAlert agree that planning and preparation are the key to staying healthy. “One of the best things a person with asthma or allergies can do is to be prepared. That’s why the A.C.T protocol is so important. Having a plan and proactively avoiding triggers will help reduce the number of serious reactions,” says Mendez. “But still, life-threatening events will happen. In that case, having a MedicAlert ID could be the difference between life and death.”

Improving Emergency Response

As part of this life-saving initiative, AAFA and MedicAlert are addressing knowledge gaps with first responders and medical personnel. The foundations will offer continuing education for emergency technicians, nurses and physicians on guidelines-based protocols for the emergency treatment of asthma attacks and severe allergic reactions.

“For over 60 years, MedicAlert has served the first responder community,” said Jervis. “The new partnership with AAFA aligns perfectly with our mission of saving and protecting lives

by sharing vital information in emergencies. Together with AAFA we can improve outcomes for people with asthma attacks or anaphylactic reactions.”

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ABOUT THE ASTHMA AND ALLERGY FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

Founded in 1953, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) is the oldest and largest non-profit patient organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with asthma, allergies and related conditions through research, education, advocacy and support. AAFA provides practical information and community-based services through its digital communities and network of chapters and support groups. AAFA is a member of the National Health Council. Learn more at aafa.org.

ABOUT MEDICALERT FOUNDATION

MedicAlert Foundation is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) membership organization, and the creator of the original medical ID. The MedicAlert emblem is globally recognized by first responders and emergency personnel, who connect with MedicAlert’s 24/7 Emergency Response Team for a member’s full health record. Since 1956, MedicAlert has been helping those with chronic medical conditions receive fast and accurate emergency care. MedicAlert serves millions of members in the U.S. and through 10 global affiliates. For more information, visit medicalert.org.