

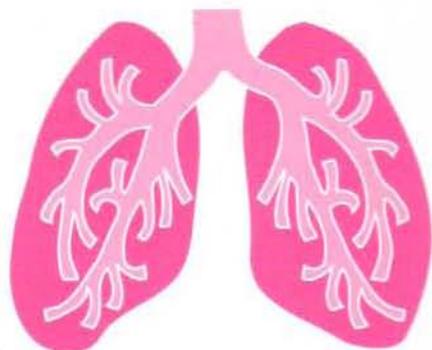
All About Your Student's Asthma

What is asthma?

- Asthma is a life-long (chronic) breathing problem caused by inflammation (swelling) of the airways.

Who gets asthma?

- Anyone can get asthma, at any age.
- About 5 million U.S. children have asthma.
- More than 15 million people in the U.S. have asthma.
- Some children will outgrow symptoms, but asthma is a life-long (chronic) condition that rarely goes away.



What are the symptoms of asthma?

- Coughing.
- Wheezing.
- Feeling short of breath or tight in the chest.

What causes asthma symptoms?

- The disease, itself, causes symptoms.
- Certain things can also make asthma symptoms appear. These things are called triggers because they trigger symptoms.
 - ⇒ Common triggers include dust-mites, furry or feathered pets, molds, cold air, exercise, viruses, strong odors (from perfumes, paints, household cleaners), cigarette smoke, pollens, cockroaches, wood smoke, and chalk dust.
 - ⇒ With the exception of exercise, help your student avoid or eliminate triggers. Exercise is GOOD for children with asthma but they may need to take medicine before exercise so that it doesn't trigger any asthma symptoms.

How do I know if my student has asthma?

- Any of the symptoms listed above can suggest asthma but a doctor needs to make the diagnosis.

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Can symptoms be prevented?

Yes, they can be prevented and controlled by:

- Recognizing and avoiding triggers.
- Treating airway inflammation (swelling) with prescribed medicines. Inflammation is an invisible symptom of persistent asthma. Treating inflammation can prevent other symptoms, but effectiveness depends upon taking prescribed medicine(s) **EVERY DAY, even when the student feels fine.**

Control asthma symptoms by:

- Recognizing and avoiding asthma triggers.
- Making regular visits to a healthcare professional.
- Correctly using prescribed medicines.

What is an asthma attack?

- Some people use the word “attack” to describe any asthma symptoms. Others use the word to describe moderate or severe symptoms only.
- Severe symptoms can be life-threatening.

What do I do if my student has an asthma attack?

Most schools keep an asthma action plan on file for all students with asthma. School policy permitting, review and keep a copy of the plan in the classroom, where you and a substitute teacher can easily find and use it. The student's asthma action plan explains that the student will need to take a quick-relief medication in the event of an asthma attack. Dosage and frequency are also indicated.

- Some students carry peak flow meters with them (or keep peak flow meters at school). Ask your student, your student's parents, or the school nurse for more information about using the peak flow meter. The meter reading can help you and the student assess the attack's severity. Otherwise:
- An asthma attack is getting worse when the symptom(s):
 - ✓ Become more frequent. At first, for example, the symptom may be an infrequent cough. If it becomes constant – the attack is getting worse. At first, chest pain may hurt for a few seconds. If the pain lasts longer – the attack is getting worse.
 - ✓ Increase in intensity. At first, for example, the symptom may be mild wheezing. If it becomes deep wheezing, the attack is getting worse.

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What do I do if my student has an asthma attack? (Con't)

- Even a mild attack can progress to a severe one.
- Symptoms can progress slowly or quickly.
- Sometimes a mild attack that goes away will come back several hours later, and the second attack may be more severe than the first.

Always monitor symptoms and follow your student's asthma action plan.

A severe attack requires **IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY CARE.**

Signs of a severe attack requiring immediate, emergency care:

- Difficulty breathing, walking, or talking
- Blue or gray coloration of the lips or fingernails
- Peak flow less than 50% of personal best
- Poor or no response to quick-relief medicine

Is an asthma attack always life-threatening?

- No. Asthma symptoms will usually disappear by taking medicine and avoiding/eliminating triggers.

How can I tell if my student's asthma is getting worse, over time?

- Symptoms occurring more often.
- Needing more medicine to relieve symptoms.
- Medicine doesn't seem to work.
- Missing more and more school because of asthma.

If your student's asthma appears to be getting worse, talk to the parent(s) and school nurse.

During an asthma attack, your actions can keep things from getting out of hand. Be prepared to respond.

- BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND HOW TO USE YOUR STUDENT'S ASTHMA ACTION PLAN.

If an asthma attack becomes life threatening

- GET EMERGENCY CARE IMMEDIATELY!