

## General Asthma Awareness: Handout

**Asthma** – Chronic respiratory condition that causes swelling in the lungs

### Common Symptoms:

- Cough
- High-pitched wheeze
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty in breathing
- Chest tightness

### Common Triggers:

- Viral infection- (99%)
- House Dust Mite
- Smoke
- Exercise
- Animal dander
- Mould spores
- Grass Pollen
- Tree Pollen
- Air Fresheners / Sprays

- Weather, temperature & seasonal changes
- Stress & excitement
- Hormones
- Pollution
- Food Allergies
- Chemicals
- Other individual triggers

*Asthma UK (2020)*

### Good Asthma Control:

- Good adherence to treatment
- Using inhaler devices & medication correctly
- Understand medication & when to use it
- Trigger avoidance
- Supportive environment
- Healthy & Active lifestyle

**All children and young people should have an Asthma Management Plan**

**Plans are available to download from Asthma UK website**

<https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/resources/#action-plans>

## **School's responsibilities in managing asthma –**

- Hold up to date Asthma Policy and register
- Reliever inhaler accessible at all times
- Staff receive relevant awareness session
- Supportive and inclusive environment
- No smoking policy
- Up to date Asthma Management Plans
- In date and labelled medication

**Parents/Guardians must communicate with the school regarding their child's specific triggers, medication and management plan**

**Parents/Guardians must provide schools with in date medication and maintain spacers**

Children with asthma can be given reliever inhalers, preventer inhalers and/or tablets to manage their symptoms



## **Correct inhaler technique with a spacer:**

1. Hold inhaler upright, remove cap
2. Shake inhaler well and put into spacer
3. Child to tilt chin up
4. Child to have tight lip seal around spacer
5. Child begin breathing in and out
6. Press inhaler to administer 1 puff
7. Child to breathe in and out 5 times
8. If needs 2<sup>nd</sup> puff, wait 30 seconds -1 minute, shake inhaler then repeat steps
9. Replace caps once finished

## Demonstration Videos Link

<https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos/>

### Storage of inhalers at school:

- Labelled box/bag for medication should include:
  - In date, labelled medication; inhalers, tablets
  - Spacer
  - Copy of management plan
- Box/bag to be kept out of reach of other children
- Do not use a plastic bag for storage as this will cause static to build up in the spacer and reduce the effect of the asthma medication.

**Asthma attack symptoms include breathlessness affecting speech, eating and sleep, increased breathing rate, reliever inhaler not helping symptoms and children can complain of chest or stomach ache**

## If a child under 12 has an asthma attack

- 1 Help them sit up straight and keep calm.**
- 2 Help them take one puff of their reliever inhaler (usually blue) every 30-60 seconds up to 10 puffs.**
- 3 Call 999 for an ambulance if:**
  - they don't feel better after 10 puffs
  - their symptoms get worse - e.g. cough, breathlessness, wheeze, tight chest or 'tummy/chest ache'
  - you're worried at any time.
- 4 Repeat step 2 if the ambulance takes longer than 15 minutes.**



[www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)



**All Asthma Management Plans will also specify what to do in the event of an asthma attack**

## Spare Emergency Inhaler in School

Schools can purchase an emergency, spare inhaler and spacer without prescription for use in an emergency if a child with asthma cannot access their own inhaler.

Guidance from Department of Health to support this can be found:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-asthma-inhalers-for-use-in-schools>

## Managing poor attendance in school due to asthma:

- Discuss attendance rate & symptoms with parents
- Review frequency of medication taken during school
- Involve SENCO/ FLO
- Encourage an asthma review at GP surgery
- Ensure that health care plan/ asthma action plan up to date
- If very poor attendance rate then consider referral to Children's Respiratory Nursing Team

## Useful Links

- NHS Choices [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- Asthma UK [www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)
- Beat Asthma [www.beatasthma.co.uk](http://www.beatasthma.co.uk)
- British Thoracic Society [www.brit-thoracic.org.uk](http://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk)