

GUIDELINES FOR ASTHMA

Asthma is a reversible obstructive airway disease that causes difficulty in breathing due to the obstruction of air flow in the bronchi of the lung. It can result from excessive sensitivity of the airways which have become blocked by bronchospasms (tight contraction of muscles), swelling, inflammation of the lining of the bronchi and plugging of the airways by excessive, thick, mucus. Air turbulence moving past these obstructed areas produce the characteristic wheezing and coughing associated with asthma.

Types of Asthma:

1. **Allergic Asthma-** increased sensitivity (allergy) to a substance which causes the body's immune system to release histamines in response to contact with the allergen. Histamines along with other chemicals lead to allergy symptoms.
2. **Exercise Induced Asthma-** a type of asthma triggered by exercise or physical exertion. Airway narrowing peaks 5 to 20 minutes after exercise begins making it difficult to catch their breath.
3. **Cough-Variant Asthma-** coughing is the predominant symptom with this type of asthma. Respiratory infections are the usual trigger.

Symptoms:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Shortness of Breath
- Chest tightness
- Increased pulse
- Increased respiratory rate
- Retractions (abdomen drawing in while breathing)
- Decreased peak flow
- Pallor
- Nervousness

Asthma can be triggered by allergens such as pollen and mold. Irritants such as tobacco, smoke, perfumes, or paint can also invoke an attack. In some cases, stimuli like exercise or cold air may be responsible for an attack. Students with asthma should have an action plan on file.

Initial treatment for any type of asthma involves:

1. **The student should sit down and try to relax while you reassure them.**
2. **Ask the student if they have medication at school, and do they carry it.**

- 3. If the student carries an inhaler, use it. Follow the doctor's order and send the student to the office with another student if they don't get relief from it.**
- 4. If the student has an inhaler in the office, send them to the office with another student to receive the medication.**
- 5. If the student doesn't have an inhaler at school send them to the office with another student.**

When a student is having an asthma attack sounds can be heard. If the student appears to have difficulty breathing and is unable to speak, or cough, get emergency help. Follow their asthma action plan. If they do not have one, call 911.

Teachers will be notified if they have a student with asthma. They will be given a copy of the student's asthma action plan. Call H. McCormack, RN @ 7808 if the student does not obtain relief after following the plan.