

WHAT SCHOOL PERSONNEL SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE STUDENT WITH ASTHMA

Prepared by the Jordan School District School Nurses

GENERAL INFORMATION	Asthma is the most common chronic disease of childhood. Most children have relatively mild asthma which can be controlled by medication. But on occasion certain factors may result in the child displaying such symptoms as wheezing or a dry hacking cough, or even severe breathing difficulty. Such asthma medications can cause side effects which may manifest themselves as behavior changes.
HOW ASTHMA AFFECTS THE LUNGS	The muscles around the bronchial tubes tighten, narrowing the airway. The inner lining of the bronchial tubes, swells causing further narrowing of the air passageways. Mucus is secreted into the bronchial tubes narrowing and plugging air passages.
COMMON ASTHMA TRIGGERS	<u>Allergens</u> such as pollen, animal dander, dust mites, and molds <u>Irritants</u> such as cold air, strong odors, weather changes and cigarette Smoke. <u>Upper Respiratory Infections</u> such as cold or flu <u>Physical Exercise</u> especially in cold weather.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ASTHMA	
MILD EPISODE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking in choppy sentences • Wheezing or a whistling sound • Breathing through mouth • Rapid breathing • Coughing • Tight chest • Shortness of breath
ACTION TO TAKE IN CASE OF BREATHING DIFFICULTY	Help the child to assume an upright position with shoulders relaxed. Talk to the child reassuringly and calmly. Help him/her to relax. Encourage the child to take appropriate medication. If the child feels like having something to drink, encourage drinking room-temperature fluids. If the medications do not appear to be working effectively, notify the School Nurse, parents, or guardians.
ASTHMA EMERGENCY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nose flaring • Bluish nail beds or lips • Failure of medication to reduce worsening symptoms • Neck muscles tight • Chest retraction (chest skin sucked in)
ACTION TO TAKE	Call parents or 911

HELP THE CHILD HAVE A NORMAL EXPERIENCE	Treat the child with asthma like a normal child. Accept the child and understand his/her condition. Do not label the child as “sick”. Do not isolate the child. Talk with the child. His/her anxiety can be lessened if you show you understand and know how to be helpful. Communication is the key. Turn an asthma episode into a learning experience for the entire class. Explain what asthma is and help the classmates to continue to accept the child.
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