

Asthma and Schools

Children spend a significant part of their day at school. That is why it is so important that asthma symptoms are well managed while they are there. It is also important that you are aware of your child's symptoms and any problems with how your child's asthma is managed in school.

Effective Communication

Good communication is essential to asthma care and management in school. The school needs to know about your child's asthma, how severe it is, what medications your child takes, and what to do in an emergency. This communication can be helped by having your health care provider complete an asthma action plan for the school (see sample provided), as well as a medication permission form that includes whether your child should be allowed to carry and use her own inhaler. You should also sign a release at school and at your health care provider's office to allow the exchange of medical information between you, the school, and your health care provider.

Your child's school needs to communicate to you its policies on how your child will get access to her medications and how they deal with emergencies, field trips, and after-school activities. The school should also inform you about any changes or problems with your child's symptoms while she is at school.

Peak Flow Meter

Peak flow meters can be helpful for school staff in determining the severity of an asthma attack. If your child's health care provider has recommended a peak flow meter, determine your child's best peak flow (your health care provider should tell you how to do this). Then keep a peak flow meter at school.

School Environment

The environment at school is as important as the environment at home. Use *How Asthma-Friendly Is Your School?* checklist to check your child's school and classroom.

Coping With Asthma at School

Students with asthma face a number of problems related to school. Talk to your child about how well his asthma is being managed in school. Also talk to your child's teachers, school nurse, coaches, and other school personnel to get their opinions on how well your child is coping with asthma in school and to see if asthma symptoms are causing any of the following problems:

- Missing school due to asthma symptoms or doctor visits.
- Avoiding school or school activities. Work with your health care provider and school personnel to encourage your child to participate in school activities.
- Not taking medication before exercise. Your child may avoid going to the school office or nurse's office to use his inhaler before exercise. Schools that allow children to carry their inhalers with them can help avoid this problem.
- Side effects from medication. Some asthma medications may alter your child's ability to perform in school. Teachers need to know if and when your child takes asthma medication so that you can be notified if there are any problems.

Physical activity is important for your child's physical and mental health. Children with asthma should be able, and encouraged, to participate completely in physical education, sports, and other activities in school. All students should have some knowledge of asthma basics and management. Encourage your school to offer asthma awareness education as part of the health education curriculum.

Know Your Rights

Learn about the federal laws that can help you with asthma management concerns at school. These include the following:

- Section 504 of the Civil Rights Act of 1973
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

American Academy of Pediatrics

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