A GUIDE TO ASTHMA FOR TEACHERS:

HOW TO USE AN INHALER WITH A CHILD
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Currently over 1.1 million children in the UK are living with asthma, making it the most common long term condition in childhood. As so many children in the UK suffer with this condition, it is vital that teachers and other school staff know how to cope with a child suffering from asthma, as well as the correct way to use an inhaler with that child.

There are two goals to achieve when you are treating a child with asthma:

1. Relieve the symptoms.
2. Prevent future attacks.

Therefore, this guide will look at how you can cope with an asthmatic child in your class from day to day as well as how you can quickly and confidently administer the correct medication when needed.

SYMPTOMS

As one in eleven children in the UK suffer with asthma, it is likely that you will have to assist a child administer an inhaler at some point. Therefore, to ensure you can act efficiently to treat the child as necessary, it is essential you know the symptoms.

If a child shows the experiencing the following symptoms, you should administer the inhaler:

- Coughing.
- Wheezing.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Painful chest.

However, you should anticipate a severe attack if the child shows the above symptoms alongside:

- Difficulty walking and talking.
- Breathing is hard and fast.

TRIGGERS OF ASTHMA ATTACKS

Whether the child suffers from minor or severe asthma, an attack can be triggered by something as little as laughing. If there is a child in your class suffering from asthma, it is important you are aware of the triggers so you can try and control them.

Triggers of asthma attacks include:

EMOTIONS: laughing, stress or crying.

THE WEATHER: a sudden change in the weather, including temperature, air quality and humidity. If the weather has changed, make sure your classroom is cool and ventilated and ensure any asthmatic child is carrying their inhaler with them during play time.

INFECTIONS: specifically respiratory tract infections, including colds.

EXERCISE: If you are teaching PE you should make sure you adapt the lesson for children with asthma. You can do this by paying more attention to the warm up and cool down and making sure they have their inhaler with them.
**Allergies:** pollen, animal or dust.

**Food:** allergies or eating too fast.

**Fumes:** smoke or chemical fumes. This trigger is most common in science classes, especially chemistry, therefore we would encourage all school staff to be alert during this lesson.

When teachers and other school staff properly understand this condition, there is no reason why a child with asthma shouldn’t be able to fully participate in education.

However, every case of asthma is different and therefore triggers will depend on the child. So, for a better insight into when you need to be more aware of the child’s asthma and situations you should avoid, we would suggest getting in contact with the child’s parents or carers and requesting a list of their triggers.

**Treatment**
If a child in your care starts to experience the symptoms of an asthma attack, you must act quickly and confidently to treat them. To help you, we have created a six point guide for you to remember:

1. Remain calm.
2. Encourage the child to sit up and lean slightly forward.
3. If possible, attach a spacer to the inhaler. Spacers are easier to use and more effective.
4. Administer the inhaler. (For more advice, see video and section below)
5. Loosen any tight clothing.
6. Reassure the child throughout.

If you have had to treat a child with asthma, it is essential that you contact their parent or carer immediately to inform them of what has happened.

**Using an Inhaler with a Child**
If you’re treating an asthmatic child with an inhaler, you should use the following technique (for visual aid, see the video):
**SHAKE THE INHALER**: shaking the inhaler will ensure enough medicine is going to be dispensed.

**FIX THE INHALER INTO THE SPACER**: for the medicine to be effective it is essential that the inhaler is fixed securely fixed to the spacer.

**PLACE THE MASK OVER THE MOUTH**: the mask needs to be secure on the child’s face with a good seal.

**SPRAY THE INHALER**: spray one puff of the inhaler so the mask is filled.

**GET THE CHILD TO BREATHE**: encourage the child to breath in and out slowly for 10 seconds.

**REPEAT STEPS 4 & 5**

**PRAISE THE CHILD**: praising and encouraging the child is a good way to improve how comfortable the child is with this process.

You should repeat this process every five minutes until the casualty’s condition improves. If their condition does not improve you should continue to treat the child and have another member of staff phone an ambulance.

As of October 1st 2014, schools will be legally allowed to hold spare inhalers in their first aid kit, therefore it is important all teachers and other school staff know how to confidently treat a child experiencing an asthma attack.

All our instructors aim to deliver learning that will encourage confidence in teachers and other school staff, check out all of our education and school training courses [here.](#)