



Supporting Students with Asthma during Athletics

Information for PE Instructors and Coaches

- ☞ Be aware of which of your students have asthma. Review the student's **Asthma Action Plan/Emergency Care Plan** with the school nurse. A copy of this plan should be readily available at all practices and competitions.
- ☞ Know the early symptoms/signs of an asthma episode. These may include any of the following: **shortness of breath, chest/throat tightness, coughing, wheezing (high pitched whistling sound).**
- ☞ Encourage students to tell you immediately if they are experiencing asthma symptoms. **Any student experiencing symptoms should stop exercising.** During the school day, these students should be referred to the School Nurse for assessment.
- ☞ Follow the procedures listed on the student's Asthma Action Plan/Emergency Care Plan (if available) if the student develops symptoms/signs of an asthma episode. **Never send a student with asthma symptoms off alone to use his/her inhaler or to visit the School Nurse.** A student must be free of asthma symptoms before resuming exercise.
- ☞ **Always make sure the student can readily access his/her rescue inhaler.** For exercise activities that take place away from school or after regular school hours, it is important that the student or coach carry the rescue inhaler. The student must be able to take the appropriate reliever/rescue medicine at the onset of symptoms. If the rescue inhaler is not available, encourage student to breathe slowly and deeply and contact parent or guardian immediately.
- ☞ **CALL 911 promptly if: symptoms worsen or if inhaler not helping after 15 – 20 minutes, trouble breathing or short of breath, can't walk or talk well, nostrils open wide, chest/neck pulled in, lips blue, hunched over or other signs of distress.**
- ☞ If prescribed by a health care provider, a reliever/rescue inhaler should be taken 15-20 minutes before exercise/PE class. Send a student for treatment as soon as possible if they have forgotten to use it. The effects of this treatment last 2-3 hours. Warm up and cool down activities will be helpful for the student with asthma.
- ☞ Let the School Nurse and parent know if asthma symptoms are interfering with exercise. Inform them if you notice lingering cough after colds, cough during/after physical activity, becoming easily "winded" during exercise, low level of stamina or continued asthma symptoms listed above, even though the child is taking medicine for asthma.
- ☞ Students with asthma may appear drowsy, tired, withdrawn, nervous, jittery, and/or hyperactive due to asthma symptoms or medications used to treat them. Refer concerns to the School Nurse and parent.
- ☞ Encourage students with asthma to participate actively in sports, but also recognize and respect their limits. Plan to adjust the type, pace, or intensity of activities during extreme weather, the pollen season, poor air quality, or when a student has allergy symptoms or a respiratory infection. Permit less strenuous activities if a recent illness precludes full participation. When asthma is under good control, students should be able to fully participate in athletic activities.

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