

**Back to School
 Asthma Spike**

With a new school year just beginning this is the ideal time to check if your school is equipped to manage children with asthma.

It is particularly important at this time as returning to school after long summer holidays presents a phenomenon called the 'February Epidemic'. This is a well-

documented occurrence of an increase in hospital admissions in both school and pre-school aged children with asthma. This trend occurs two weeks after school goes back, with the spike generally peaking in mid to late February.

This spike in asthma is strongly associated with an increased exposure to colds and flu, the most common triggers for asthma, and also children not following their asthma management plan properly over the holidays.

It is essential that parents provide your school with a written asthma action plan, prepared by their general practitioner, for your students with asthma. It is also important that schools are fully equipped and know what to do during an asthma emergency. Following the 'Back to School Asthma Management Checklist' below can ensure your school is prepared for the 'Back to School Asthma Spike'.

**Back to School
 Asthma Management Checklist**

- Book your staff into a FREE one hour asthma education session**

The Asthma Foundations of Australia recommends that all education staff, teaching and non-teaching, attend training to ensure they are able to respond to an asthma emergency and are informed about best practice asthma management. If you would like to book your school's FREE education session or

order additional resources please contact your local Asthma Foundation on 1800 645 130.

- Check the contents of your school's Asthma Emergency Kits**

A Kit should include include:

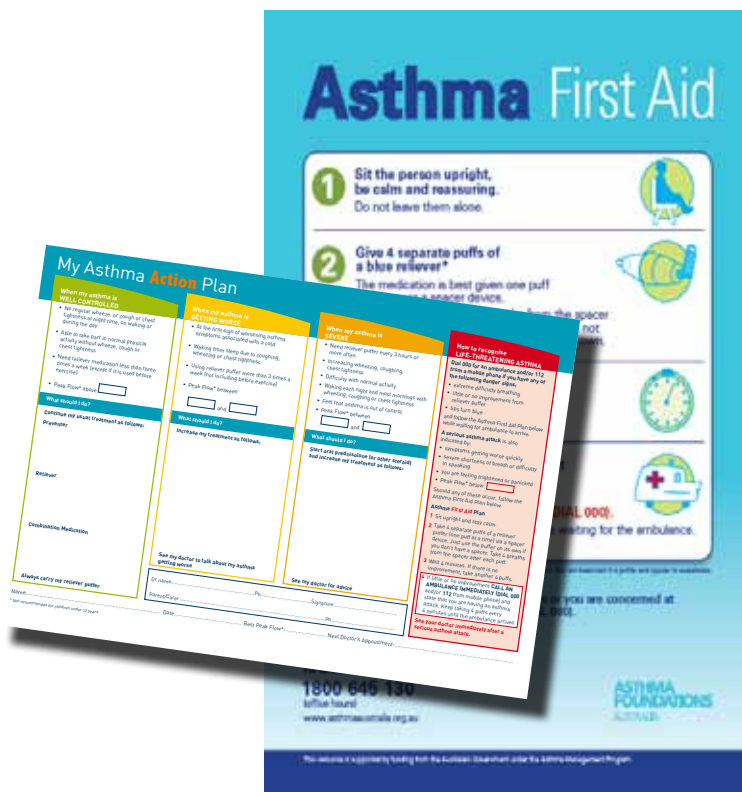
- Blue reliever medication (check the expiry date)
- Spacer (large or small)
- Alcohol swabs
- Asthma Emergency Kit card

- Update your students' written Asthma Action Plans**

- Ensure all school staff are familiar with your school's Asthma Policy**

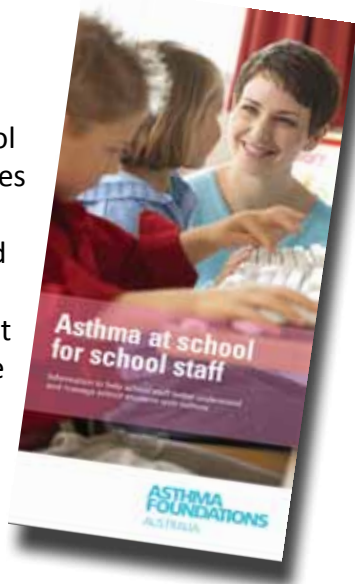
- Display the Asthma First Aid procedure in suitable locations around the school**

Asthma First Aid posters and fridge magnets are available from your local Asthma Foundation.



Asthma at school for school staff brochure

The Asthma Foundations of Australia have recently updated their national brochure series including 'Asthma at school for school staff'. This brochure provides information to help school staff better understand and manage school students with asthma. It is important for school staff to be aware of the symptoms, triggers and management of asthma so they can assist their students while at school.



To order a copy for your school staff contact your local Asthma Foundation on 1800 645 130 or visit www.asthmaaustralia.org.au

Preparing for Sport Carnivals

Sporting carnivals and events are a time when students with asthma may be at higher risk of an asthma attack. In a new environment they can be exposed to triggers that they don't come across in their regular daily lives. This could be anything from



airborne particles like dust or pollen, more extreme temperature changes or exercise at a level they are not used to.

If your students manage their asthma well, these triggers should not hinder them from participating in sport. Many elite athletes with asthma compete in

all types of environments with outstanding results. Well managed asthma should not stop anyone from joining in at sporting carnivals.

Recent feedback from some schools has revealed a high rate of emergency asthma management at sporting events. With this in mind, and with schools planning for events such as swimming carnivals and cross country events, schools are urged to review their Asthma Emergency Management Plans. This will ensure that both your staff and your students are well prepared for the day.

Prior to the event, consider:

- Give parents plenty of time to have their child's Asthma Action Plan updated for school
- Let parents know they can contact their local Asthma Foundation to discuss their child's condition by calling 1800 645 130

• Remind students to bring their own medication and spacer, ensure all of it is easily accessible and not left locked away in a bag in change rooms or left on a bus



• Run through the 4x4 Asthma Emergency Response procedure with staff at a planning meeting prior to the event. Posters can be obtained from your local Asthma Foundation

• Ensure staff know where to find the Asthma Emergency Kits (AEKs) and where they will be kept during the event. Also ensure that you have a sufficient number of them for the size of the event location

• Make sure the AEKs are clearly marked, have alcohol wipes, spacers, asthma emergency instructions and reliever medication

• Check the expiry dates of medication held within the AEKs

• If a child is known to be unwell or to have been unwell recently do not insist they participate.

www.asthmaaustralia.org.au

Asthma Triggers

Exposure to pollens, grasses, cigarette smoke, pollution, colds and flus, moulds, dust mites, animal hair and changes in the weather may worsen symptoms for people affected by asthma.

Finding out what triggers an individual's asthma or makes their asthma worse is the first step in taking control of asthma. Every person can have different asthma triggers and some people do not even know what some of their triggers are. This is why it is important to remove as many triggers from the environment as possible to keep the exposure to a minimum.

Suggestions for minimising triggers in the school environment

In the classroom/school buildings:

- Areas are kept as dust free as possible - rooms are damp dusted regularly
- Use 'low allergen/low irritant' cleaning agents
- Do not wear strong perfumes or use room deodorisers
- If carpeting, consider options, e.g. short pile
- It is preferable that floor surfaces are cleaned/vacuumed frequently and when persons with asthma are not present
- Ceiling fans and air conditioning vents are cleaned regularly
- Heating systems are electric or flued gas wherever possible
- Rooms are checked regularly for mould
- Rooms are well ventilated

Around the school yard:

- Lawns are mowed when the person with asthma is not in the area, or is indoors
- Lawn, weed and insect sprays are only used when the person with asthma is not in the area or is indoors
- Plants known to trigger allergies are removed and replaced with low allergy plants. More information about low allergy plants can be found in the

Asthma and Gardening brochures from your local Asthma Foundation.

- If your school has pets they are kept outside
- 'No smoking' policy is in place in and around the school grounds

For the students:

- Encourage people with asthma to remain indoors during extreme temperature days, e.g. very cold or very hot days
- Encourage people with asthma triggered by pollens or pollution to remain indoors on high pollen and/or high pollution days
- Encourage students to use roll on deodorants rather than aerosols when at school (especially in corridors and change rooms)



Encourage Parents to order an Asthma Control Pack!

A recent survey conducted by the Asthma Foundation of SA reveals that only 14.5% of respondents have an Asthma Action Plan – a figure well below the nationally reported figure of 22.5%.

(Source: Asthma in Australia 2008)

Why not include this article in your newsletters to parents encouraging them to order an Asthma Control Pack!

Please contact Robyn if you would like a copy of this article.

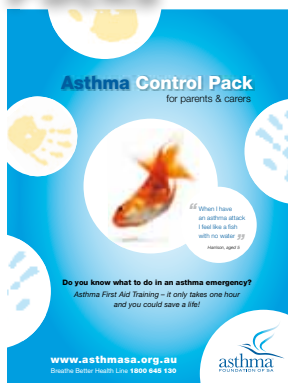
Need new reliever medication for Asthma Emergency Kits!

To obtain reliever medication for school Asthma Emergency Kits your school will need to provide the Asthma Foundation of SA (AFSA) with evidence (ie by faxing a certificate) that staff are up-to-date with their asthma first aid training (this includes BELS training by Red Cross).

Your school will be issued with an Authority to Purchase letter that will enable you to purchase the reliever medication at your local pharmacy. Your school will be issued with one card per Asthma Emergency Kit registered with the AFSA.



Asthma Control Packs



Is your asthma under control?

**Register today for your
FREE Asthma Control Pack**

Asthma Control Packs provide information for students and their parents to help them better manage their asthma.

To obtain your **FREE Asthma Control Pack**, please visit our website www.asthmasa.org.au or telephone The Asthma Foundation of SA on **8238 9300**.

If you would like further information or would like to talk to one of our friendly educators, you can call us on **1800 645 1300** between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

2010 FREE General Public Information Sessions

The Asthma Foundation of SA runs "Live Well" sessions designed to provide the person with asthma or their carer with an update on current asthma management:

Livewell with Asthma

Tuesday 20th April - 10am-11.30am
Thursday 20th May - 10am-11.30am

Livewell with Allergy & Anaphylaxis

Tuesday 25th May - 10am-12noon

Livewell with Eczema

Friday 13th August - 9.30am-11.30am

• BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL •

For further information about the Schools program
please contact Robyn at the Asthma Foundation of SA,
300 South Rd, Hilton SA 5033.

Phone: 8238 9301 Email: robyn@asthmasa.org.au
Fax: 8238 9303 Web: www.asthmasa.org.au



www.asthmaaustralia.org.au