

Asthma Management Checklist for Parents of Children with Asthma

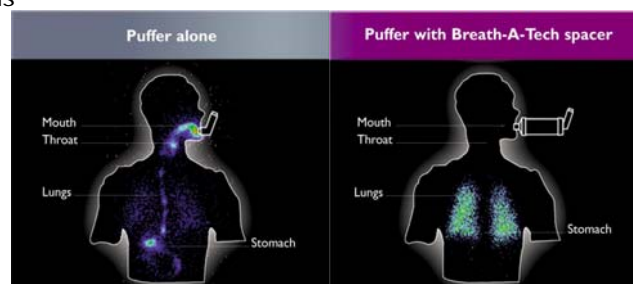
1. **Does your child have an up to date Asthma Action Plan that tells them how to manage their asthma and what to do if their asthma gets worse?** Your child's asthma should be reviewed regularly with their doctor and their school should have a copy of their Asthma Action Plan. It is very common for children to have occasional or seasonal asthma. An Asthma Action Plan is still needed for when this occurs.
2. **Does your child carry their reliever puffer and spacer with them at all times?** Medication needs to be available wherever your child may be (school, sporting field, home). The expiry date of the medication and the amount of medication left in the canister should also be checked regularly.
3. **Are you and your child aware of your child's asthma triggers and do you take steps to avoid them?** It is also important to highlight the key symptoms, triggers or special features of your child's asthma with their teachers so they can assist in managing your child's asthma more efficiently.
4. **Do you listen to what your child says?** They will be aware of their asthma symptoms and should be able to tell you when they need their medication.
5. **Does your child take their asthma medication correctly?** Good technique allows more medication to get into the lungs where it is needed.

Spacers- Why use them?

It is recommended that **anyone, of any age** using an asthma puffer should use it in conjunction with a spacer, particularly, children of all ages and during an acute asthma attack. Spacers deliver more medication to the lungs and minimise the side effects of asthma medications.

Using a spacer with your asthma puffer-

- Is significantly more effective than a puffer on its own
- Acts as a chamber, holding the medication so it can be breathed into the lungs, rather than being fired into the back of the throat from the aerosol canister
 - Less medication is deposited in the mouth and throat
- Requires less coordination - you don't have to worry about pressing the puffer and breathing in at exactly the same time
- Is approximately **3 times more** effective at delivering medication into the small airways of the lungs, where the medication is required, than using a puffer alone
- Reduces irritation and side effects (such as thrush and hoarseness of voice) associated with preventer medications



What Triggers Asthma?

Although we don't know what causes asthma, we do know that under certain circumstances the airways react and asthma symptoms develop. We refer to the stimuli that can lead to asthma as "triggers". Triggers are everywhere. Triggers cause inflammation or swelling in your airways and make your asthma worse. Reducing your exposure to things that trigger your asthma is a large part of taking control of your asthma.

Different people react to different asthma triggers and many people with asthma react to a variety of triggers. Asthma may develop from exposure to one trigger or from a number of triggers simultaneously (e.g. a student with a cold goes into a change room where deodorant has been sprayed). For some people it is difficult to determine what triggers their asthma.

Avoiding or reducing exposure to known asthma triggers for an individual is one form of control, but is not always possible. Certain asthma medications can provide some protection that reduces the likelihood of asthma developing.

Common asthma triggers:

Colds and Flu: The most common trigger, particularly for children. When a student with asthma has a cold or the flu it is highly probable that they will develop asthma symptoms.

Exercise: A trigger for many people with asthma. This trigger should not be avoided, but exercise induced asthma can be managed by taking your blue reliever puffer 5-10 minutes before activity and warming up and warming down after exercise.

Smoke: Children of mothers who smoke when pregnant and those who experience passive smoking in early childhood have a higher risk of developing asthma. As well as active and passive cigarette smoke, woodsmoke from open fires, burn-offs or bushfires can trigger asthma.

It is important to work with our school to ensure that your child's asthma is managed appropriately. If you have any questions about asthma management at school or would like to discuss asthma further, please call the Asthma Helpline on 1800 645 130 or visit **The Asthma Foundation of Victoria's** website www.asthma.org.au or www.asthmafriendlyschools.org.au