

## **ACTIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM TEACHER**

### *Help Children With Asthma and Their Families Manage Asthma*

- **Consult with your school nurse** or principal for updated policy and procedures for managing students with asthma, including managing medication and responding to emergencies, such as an asthma episode.
- **Know your role.** Know how to easily access a student's asthma action plan or have a copy of it in the classroom, maintained in a confidential manner. Review it with the student and the parent(s) or guardian(s) to determine if classroom modifications are needed and how to work toward the goal of the student's full participation in classroom activities. Ask the student to tell you when he/she is having any difficulty in breathing. Know the early warning signs of an asthma episode and what steps to take in the event of an asthma episode. **Don't delay getting medical help** for a student with severe or persistent breathing difficulty.
- **Develop a clear procedure** with the student and parent/guardian **for handling schoolwork missed** due to asthma or illness.
- **Report if student's symptoms are interfering** with learning or activities with peers. Refer any problem to the school nurse and the parent(s). Common side effects of medicine that warrant referral are nervousness, nausea, hyperactivity, jitteriness, and drowsiness.
- **Alert** school administrators, school nurses, and parent/guardian of **changes in a student's performance** or behavior that might reflect trouble with asthma. The vast majority of students with asthma are able to participate fully in the school when their asthma is well managed.
- Encourage the student with asthma to **participate fully in physical activities**. Plan activities to allow for variations in stamina or tolerance for exercise, especially if the student is recovering from illness. Changes in weather (hot, cold, breezy) and poor air quality (smoke, smog, pollen) often aggravate asthma.
- **Plan field trips** and other activities in a way that ensures students with asthma can fully participate.

### *Look for Children with Uncontrolled Asthma*

- **Be alert for signs of uncontrolled asthma.**
  - o Lingering cough after a cold
  - o Persistent cough during the day
  - o Coughing during the night or early in the morning
  - o Coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, or shortness of breath after vigorous physical activity or activity in cold or windy weather
  - o Low level of stamina during physical activity or reluctance to participate
  - o Coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, or shortness of breath even though the child is taking medicine for asthma
  - o Increased use of asthma medicine to relieve coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, or shortness of breath
- **Advise the school nurse** when you suspect **poorly controlled asthma** in a student, so that the school nurse can discuss the situation with the student's parent or guardian and suggest referral to their physician for a proper diagnosis or treatment update.
- **Be aware of** students with asthma in your class. Understand their **triggers and symptoms**. Observe what seems to make them better or worse, and share your observations with the school nurse.

*Source: Managing Asthma: A Guide for Schools. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. September 1991. Revised July 2003. NIH Publication No 91-2650. Reviewed by Asthma Ready® Communities staff (2010).*