

When Should Students With Asthma or Allergies Carry and Self-Administer Emergency Medications at School?

Guidance for Health Care Providers Who Prescribe Emergency Medications

Physicians and others authorized to prescribe medications, working together with parents and school nurses, should consider the list of factors below in determining when to entrust and encourage a student with diagnosed asthma and/or anaphylaxis to carry and self-administer prescribed emergency medications at school.

Most students can better manage their asthma or allergies and can more safely respond to symptoms if they carry and self-administer their life saving medications at school. **Each student should have a personal asthma/allergy management plan on file at school that addresses carrying and self-administering emergency medications.** If carrying medications is not initially deemed appropriate for a student, then his/her asthma/allergy management plan should include action steps for developing the necessary skills or behaviors that would lead to this goal. All schools need to abide by state laws and policies related to permitting students to carry and self-administer asthma inhalers and epinephrine auto-injectors.

Health care providers should assess student, family, school, and community factors in determining when a student should carry and self-administer life saving medications. **Health care providers should communicate their recommendation to the parent/guardian and the school,** and maintain communication with the school, especially the school nurse. Assessment of the factors below should help to establish a profile that guides the decision; however, responses will not generate a "score" that clearly differentiates students who would be successful.

Student factors:

- Desire to carry and self-administer
- Appropriate age, maturity, or developmental level
- Ability to identify signs and symptoms of asthma and/or anaphylaxis
- Knowledge of proper medication use in response to signs/symptoms
- Ability to use correct technique in administering medication
- Knowledge about medication side effects and what to report
- Willingness to comply with school's rules about use of medicine at school, for example:
 - Keeping one's bronchodilator inhaler and/or auto-injectable epinephrine with him/her at all times;
 - Notifying a responsible adult (e.g., teacher, nurse, coach, playground assistant) during the day when a bronchodilator inhaler is used and *immediately* when auto-injectable epinephrine is used;
 - Not sharing medication with other students or leaving it unattended;
 - Not using bronchodilator inhaler or auto-injectable epinephrine for any other use than what is intended;
- Responsible carrying and self-administering medicine at school in the past (e.g. while attending a previous school or during an after-school program).

NOTE: Although past asthma history is not a sure predictor of future asthma episodes, those children with a history of asthma symptoms and episodes might benefit the most from carrying and self-administering emergency medications at school. It may be useful to consider the following.

- Frequency and location of past sudden onsets
- Presence of triggers at school
- Frequency of past hospitalizations or emergency department visits due to asthma

