

Tips for teachers: managing children's asthma

For parents, leaving their child at school for the first time is a big occasion – especially when their child has asthma. **Every child should be able to enjoy school** and join in on everything it offers, which is why Philips has compiled this advice for teachers. Helping them to recognize and to contribute to the successful management of a child's asthma, and to **stop it getting in the way of them being happy at school**



What is asthma?



Asthma is a potentially serious chronic disease that causes the narrowing and inflammation of the airways, making it hard for sufferers to breathe. Some **334 million people around the world suffer from asthma**, with the most common disease in children¹. Although there is currently no cure, proper use of the effective medicines on offer can relieve symptoms and cut the risk of asthma attacks

It's important not to single out those with asthma, but **by knowing which children in your class have been diagnosed, you can be prepared for any issues that may arise**. Arrange a meeting with the parents to talk through their child's asthma action plan – this is a written, bespoke asthma management program that references the triggers that make a child's symptoms worse and explain clearly what to do if they experience those symptoms



Understand

Symptoms may differ from child to child, but there are a handful of common indicators that a child may be **suffering from an asthma episode**. These include:



Difficulty breathing; wheezing and coughing



Drowsiness or tiredness



Difficulty completing physical activity



Continuous high incidence of runny nose



A tight chest, anxiety or soreness



Communicate

Speaking with parents or guardians regularly will help you to act efficiently and appropriately in class. **Key things to ask are:**



What **typically triggers** their child's asthma and what are **their symptoms**?



What are their **medication needs** and usage methods?



How you can let them know if their child has **any asthma symptoms at school** or has used their reliever inhaler **throughout the day**?



How would they prefer to get **any updates** about their **child's asthma** (e.g. telephone, email, text message)?



What to do/how to contact them **in an emergency**?

Symptoms may also affect a child's ability to pay attention and, when serious, restrict their attendance of school. Because of this, it's important to communicate with parents to ensure children don't miss out on key stages of learning



Encouragement



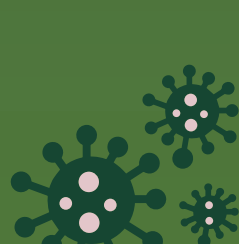
Plan fun, **outdoor activities for everyone to enjoy**. As long as your pupil is taking the right precautions such as **regular medication** and the air quality is satisfactory, activities such as sports are **encouraged for asthma sufferers**



Prevention



When planning outdoor activities, **check pollen count** or air quality alerts that may affect children with asthma. There are simple free apps that can be **downloaded on your phone** to check this, such as the Air Matters app. Try to plan alternative activities to alleviate **symptoms for sufferers**, whilst ensuring they are not alienated from classmates



Keep allergens at bay. Chalk from blackboards, dust mites, pet-hair and odours from pens and paints **can all trigger asthma**



Keep classrooms **well ventilated** so fresh air can circulate the space. An air purifier is also an effective way of improving air quality indoors, as it **reduces irritants and allergens** that can trigger health problems. For air conditioned or heated rooms, it's important to **frequently check the maintenance** of the system in place. Proper air flow, filtration and control of humidity will help to ensure there **won't be an indoor air problem**



Checklist

If a child in your class suffers from an asthma attack, **it's important to act quickly and stay calm**. Below are five tips to help you handle an attack in the classroom:

1.



Refer to the child's **asthma action plan** immediately

2.



Planning for emergencies is important, so make sure that **a rescue inhaler is always easily accessible**

3.



Inform parents **as soon as possible**

4.



Never leave a child without adult supervision **until they are feeling better**

5.



If symptoms persist and worsen despite the steps taken above, **seek emergency help**

For further information on asthma, head to Asthma.org.uk or contact your local doctor for advice.

¹ <http://www.globalasthma-report.org/burden/burden.php>, 2014