MANAGEMENT OF AN ACUTE ASTHMA EPISODE IN THE SCHOOL

Adapted from the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), Washington State Chapter, with permission

Asthma is the leading cause of absenteeism in school-aged children. A school-based asthma management program should allow children with asthma or allergies to participate in all school learning and recreational activities with few restrictions. An effective program will ultimately help to minimize school absences.

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Anxious look
- Stooped body posture
- Diaphoresis
- Dyspnea
- Rapid respirations (greater than 25-30 at rest)
- Retractions
- Nasal flaring
- Depressed sternal notch
- Nausea/vomiting
- Fatigue
- Decreased peak flow value

### WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- Complaints of chest tightness
- Coughing
- Irregular breathing
- Abnormal breathe sound:
  - Decreased or absent breath sounds
  - Wheezing
  - Rales
  - Rhonchi
- Prolonged expiration
- Rapid heart rate

### WHAT TO DO IN AN ASTHMA CRISIS AT SCHOOL

- If possible, review the student’s Asthma Action Plan for Personal Best, current medications and emergency medications.
- Have student sit upright and check breathing with peak flow meter—if possible.
- Administer prescribed medication by inhaler (medication should be inhaled slowly and fully).
  OR
- Administer medication by nebulizer if prescribed.
- Reassure student and attempt to keep him/her calm and breathing slowly and deeply.
- Student should respond to treatment within 15-20 minutes. Recheck with peak flow meter.
- If NO change or breathing becomes significantly worse, contact parent immediately and call for emergency help.

### SEEK IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY CARE IF STUDENT:

- Coughs constantly
- Is unable to speak in complete sentences without taking a breath
- Has lips, nails, mucous membranes that are gray or blue
- Demonstrates severe retractions and/or nasal flaring
- Is vomiting persistently
- Has 50% reduced peak flow reading
- Has pulse greater than 120/minute
- Has respirations greater than 30/minute
- Is severely restless
- Shows no improvement after 15 minutes

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