

## EXERCISE, SPORTS DAYS AND THE ASTHMATIC PUPIL

### Asthma Triggers

A trigger is something that irritates the airways (the tubes leading to the lungs), causing them to react. This sets off a process which leads to asthma symptoms being displayed and may even lead to a serious asthma attack.

These symptoms include:

1. Dry cough
2. Wheezing (a whistling noise when they breath out)
3. A feeling of shortness of breath
4. A feeling of chest tightness or 'squeezing' over the chest
5. Younger pupils may say their tummy is sore.



Triggers vary from child to child but common triggers include:

1. Animals
2. Exercise
3. Viruses
4. Cold air
5. Emotion

Ideally, no child with asthma would be exposed to any of their triggers. Unfortunately, this is not always practical.

Exercise should be encouraged for all children including those with asthma.

There may be times when exercise may need to be in moderation if the pupil has been unwell with their asthma. PE teachers must be aware of which children have asthma and should be informed if they are going through a time when they may be more vulnerable.

Sports days may make them more vulnerable if they are excited, anxious and exposed to pollens for longer than usual periods. Always ensure asthmatic pupils have their reliever inhaler with them before they start exercising and staff are aware of the steps to take in the event of an attack.

### When is shortness of breath during exercise ok?

Not all feelings of shortness of breath during exercise are a result of asthma. For example, its really normal to get a little short of breath when exercising. What is important, is that this is not associated with any wheeze or coughing and quickly settles after the child stops exercising. If this is what happens, the shortness of breath isn't due to asthma and doesn't need any treatment with an inhaler. In this situation, the child should be reassured and can be encouraged to continue exercising.