



Top tips if you have a child at school with asthma

Responsibility

It is the parent's responsibility to inform the school that your child is attending that they have asthma and to provide any medication that may be needed whilst at school.

Your child's teacher or head of year at secondary level education should oversee the management of their medical condition whilst at school.

A school Health Nurse will be allocated to the school but won't be on site all of the time. They can provide support to you and your child if needed but will not be there to administer any medications or monitor symptoms at school.

Your child should have a School Personalised Asthma Management plan (School PAAP – *available in 'useful documents for your child's school'*). Your GP should provide this as part of your child's annual asthma review or you may have been given one from the hospital if under their care.

School should offer to complete an individual healthcare plan (IHP - *available in 'useful documents for your child's school'*) which will detail any medical conditions and medication needed whilst at school. This should be completed between school and the parent with support from the school health nurse if needed. If your child is under the care of a specialist respiratory team, the nurse from this team will also be able to provide support if needed. Their PAAP can be used alongside this but shouldn't replace it.

Meetings

You can arrange a meeting with your child's teacher and anyone else who you feel would benefit from knowing more about your child's asthma. The IHP can be completed at this time and it will give you the opportunity to discuss your child's asthma with key people. They will need to know and document what triggers your child's asthma, how it affects them and how they will know if they need their blue (salbutamol) inhaler.

You may want to find out what policies and procedures the school has in place for their pupils with asthma. Some schools have a photo display board of their children who have a medical condition – ask if this is in place. You can also ask if the staff receive any training around asthma. There is a now nationally recommended training freely available for staff who may care for a pupil with asthma.

Ensure that school have your up-to-date contact details and know when you would want to be contacted. Some parents find home to school asthma diaries are a useful way to communicate with school about their condition and inhaler usage in primary schools.

Secondary school pupils should be encouraged to carry their school asthma management plan in their school planner or on their phone so that it is available to show teachers or friends if they feel they need help.

Medications

You should provide school with an in-date reliever inhaler. This may be a blue inhaler or their MART inhaler. This is usually the only inhaler/medication that needs to be in school with your child to manage their asthma on a daily basis. The inhaler should ideally be taken into school in the original box with a prescription label showing your child's name. Parents should check that school have plenty of inhaler left and that it is still in date.

If your child is using a metered dose inhaler (puffer type), a spacer device **must** be provided so that the medication can be delivered effectively. Your GP will be able to prescribe this for you.

School should be shown how your child uses their inhaler and encouraged to always administer it through a spacer device if it is a metered dose inhaler (*available in 'useful documents for your child's school'*).

If your child has a device that does not need a spacer, they may be allowed to carry this with them as they become more independent. Primary schools may prefer to keep the inhaler for your child.

Some schools keep emergency blue reliever inhalers and spacers which they have purchased themselves in line with the Emergency Inhalers at School document (*available from the 'asthma in schools' homepage*). Find out if your child's school has these and how they would access them if needed. You must sign a consent form giving permission for your child to use an emergency inhaler if their own is not available. If the emergency spacer is used for your child, it is reasonable for school to ask you to replace this, which you will be able to get on prescription from your GP.

Your child's reliever inhaler is the only inhaler that should be taken to school. Other regular asthma medications should be given at home as they are usually once or twice daily doses. School will need to be informed if your child is taking steroid tablets (prednisolone) and whether it is a short 3-day course or if taken as a regular daily tablet.

Asthma management plan

You should provide school with an asthma management plan as above. This should detail when and how much reliever should be administered, how to recognise signs of worsening symptoms and what to do.

Children should never be left alone if they are having symptoms of an asthma attack and should not be sent to get their inhaler – it should be brought to them.

Sports

Exercise is good for everyone even if you have asthma and should be encouraged. If you are concerned that sport at school may trigger your child's symptoms, speak directly to the PE teacher about this. If aerosol sprays are a trigger for your child, they may need to change for PE lessons in a different area due to the risk of exposure in the changing room.