

Back to school checklist

Asthma symptoms to recognise

Ensure your child knows how to recognise symptoms of asthma, has an up-to-date asthma action plan, knows how to use their medications and that they can confidently ask for help.

Common symptoms of asthma include:

- wheezing
- coughing
- shortness of breath
- chest tightness.

First aid for asthma

If your child experiences asthma at school:

- Follow their personal written asthma action plan.
- If they don't have an action plan, take 4 separate puffs of a blue/grey reliever via a spacer.
- If the symptoms aren't going away or are getting worse, then follow the steps in first aid for asthma.

First aid for asthma chart tailored to combination inhalers

The [First aid for asthma chart](#) is based on combination inhalers with formoterol (Bumix, DuoResp, Fostair, Symbicort) and outlines how to use one of these inhalers if this is the person's usual reliever. It is designed for patients using a combination of inhaled corticosteroid and formoterol, taken as needed to relieve symptoms, with or without daily maintenance doses.

[First Aid for Asthma 12+](#) and the [First Aid for Asthma Children Under 12](#) charts can be downloaded from our website: nationalasthma.org.au.



Children with asthma

The start of the school year can be busy enough without the added concern of your child's asthma flaring up in the classroom or playground.

The back-to-school period is one peak time when children are most at risk of asthma flare-ups, with a spike in asthma attacks, emergency department presentations and hospitalisations seen during the first few weeks of the school term every year.

When children return to classrooms, factors such as stress, a change of environment or exposure to allergens and less strict asthma management over the holidays, can trigger asthma. A new set of classmates can also bring a new batch of cold and flu bugs, which exacerbates asthma flare-ups.

Taking preventative measures before and during the first few weeks of school can go a long way to helping keep your child well and out of hospital.



What can you do?

Reduce the chances of this happening for your child by completing our back-to-school asthma checklist.

At home:

- Have an asthma review with your child’s GP before the school year begins.
- Obtain an up-to-date written asthma action plan.
- Revise good asthma management including correct use of medication devices, either with the GP, practice nurse or pharmacist.
- If your child is prescribed a preventer medication, ensure correct routine before they head back to school.
- Ensure medications are not empty, nor expired.
- Pack a spare reliever puffer and spacer in your child’s school bag.

At school:

- Ensure that your child can recognise their asthma symptoms and is comfortable asking for help at school if necessary.
- Give the school and/or childcare a copy of the written asthma action plan. ANY written asthma action plan is acceptable providing it has:
 - medications listed that your child requires for their asthma
 - clear instructions on when to take extra doses of medication
 - your child’s name and date of birth
 - the name of the doctor writing the plan
 - the date the plan was reviewed.
- Talk to school administrators about possible asthma triggers and whether staff members receive training on how to recognise and respond to asthma symptoms.



Download First Aid for Asthma Charts



Download Written Asthma Action Plans



Disclaimer: It is important to note that information contained in this fact sheet is not intended to replace professional medical advice. Any questions regarding a medical diagnosis or treatment should be directed to a medical practitioner.