



# ASTHMA MANAGEMENT

## **The Hazard**

Asthma affects around 11% of Australian children and is one of the most common reasons for school absenteeism and hospital admission in school aged children.

Asthma attacks must be identified quickly and treated correctly to ensure the best outcome for students affected. Teachers and staff must be aware of the symptoms, triggers and best practice management of asthma so they can assist their asthmatic students while at School.

If you think a student may be having a serious asthma attack, call an ambulance and give the student reliever medication in accordance with the student's Asthma Action Plan or the Asthma First Aid Plan.

## **Legal Obligations**

The Victorian Registration Standards (sch 2 cl 12) require that the School must ensure that the care, safety and welfare of all students attending the school is in accordance with any applicable State and Commonwealth laws, and that all staff are advised of their obligations under those laws.

All staff have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to protect a student in their care from risks of injury that are reasonably foreseeable. The keys to prevention of an asthma attack is knowledge of the student who has been diagnosed with asthma, awareness of asthma triggers, and prevention of exposure to those triggers. Partnerships between schools and parents/carers are important in helping the student avoid an asthma attack.

Asthma also falls within the definition of disability for the purposes of both the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth). This means that schools must ensure that they do not unlawfully discriminate, either directly or indirectly, against students with asthma. Refer to Disability Discrimination.

## **St Joseph's's Policy**

St Joseph's is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all our students and complying with the Department of Education and Training's Asthma Guidelines as amended by the Department from time to time (Guidelines).

### **It is our policy that:**

We provide, as far as practicable, a safe and supportive environment in which students diagnosed with asthma can participate equally in all aspects of the student's schooling

We adopt the recommendations of the Guidelines where relevant to the School

Asthma Emergency Kits and other reliever medication are purchased, stored and maintained in accordance with the Guidelines and the School's particular circumstances

Strategies are in place to communicate with and advise staff, students and parents/carers and to raise awareness about asthma and the School Asthma Management Policy in the school community

Staff are appropriately trained and have knowledge about asthma and the School's asthma prevention strategies and policies and procedures in responding to an asthma attack.

This policy does not apply to kindergarten and outside school hours care programs, whether run by School or an external education provider. Both these services are regulated by the requirements of the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Cth).

### **Safe Work Practices**

St Joseph's has developed the following work practices and procedures for managing asthma:

- **Identifying Asthma – Causes, Signs and Symptoms**
- **Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plans**
- **Asthma Emergency Kits and Reliever Medication**
- **Asthma Communication Plan**
- **School Planning and Emergency Response Procedure**
- **Prevention Strategies**
- **Asthma Training and Briefings.**

### **Risk Management Checklist**

The Principal completes the annual Risk Management Checklist to monitor the School's compliance with the Guidelines and this policy.

We regularly update the Risk Management Checklist in line with any changes to the information on the Department of Education and Training's Asthma Management in Schools page.

All staff are trained and aware of the protocols for managing Asthma.

All staff are trained and aware of the protocols that need to be followed in regards to Asthma.

The School will allocate specific responsibilities in relation to asthma management to designated staff members when required under this policy.

### **Key Definitions**

#### **Asthma**

Asthma is a disease of the airways. Asthma is a long-term (chronic) disease. Asthma symptoms can be triggered by different things for different people. Common triggers include colds and flu, allergies and cigarette smoke.

People with asthma have sensitive airways in their lungs which react to triggers, causing a 'flare-up'. In a flare-up, the muscles around the airway squeeze tight, the airways swell and become narrow and there is more mucus. This makes it harder to breathe.

An asthma flare-up can come on slowly (over hours, days or even weeks) or very quickly (over minutes). A sudden or severe asthma flare-up is sometimes called an asthma attack.

In this policy, the terms asthma attack and asthma flare-up are both used.

#### **Asthma Action Plan**

Also known as Asthma Care Plans and Asthma Management Plans, the Asthma Action Plan lists the student's prescribed asthma medication as well as the signs and symptoms students show when they are experiencing an asthma attack, including treatment for said attack. This plan is one of the requirements of the student's Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan.

To assist staff in identifying asthma signs and symptoms, including their severity and action to be taken, the Asthma Foundation of Victoria has developed preferred Action Plans for use in schools. These are designed to complement, rather than replace the student's Asthma Action Plan. It is our preference that the Asthma Foundation's Action Plans are used by students.

If a student presents with a different Asthma Action Plan, the \*insert e.g. Asthma Supervisor or first aid officer\* in consultation with the student's parents/carers can transcribe the information on to the specific Asthma Action Plan for Victorian Schools. This Action Plan must be signed by the parent of the student for authenticity and the original Asthma Action Plan provided by the parent must be kept in the student's file.

### **Asthma Emergency Kit (AEK)**

A specific first aid kit for asthma designed to be portable in an emergency.

Asthma Emergency Kits can be purchased from Asthma Australia or the Asthma Foundation and reliever medication is available from pharmacies.

### **Asthma Education Session**

An education session delivered by the Asthma Foundation of Victoria, the National Asthma Council or another asthma peak body designed to educate staff on the basics of asthma. This can be a face-to-face session or online training.

### **Asthma Management Training Course**

This means:

- a course in asthma management training that is accredited as either a:
- VET accredited course in accordance with Part 3 of the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Cth) that includes a competency check in the administration of a pressure metered dose inhaler (puffer) and spacer device, or
- course in asthma management training accredited under Chapter 4 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority that includes a competency check in the administration of a pressure metered dose inhaler (puffer) and spacer device
- any other course including an online course, approved by the Department for the purpose of these Guidelines.

### **Communication Plan**

A plan developed by the school which provides information to all school staff, students and parents about asthma and the school's asthma management policy.

### **Diagnosed with Asthma**

In relation to a student, means a student who has been diagnosed by a medical practitioner as having a medical condition that relates to asthma and is at high risk of having an asthma episode at school.

### **Exercise Induced Bronchoconstriction (EIB)**

EIB (formerly known as exercise induced asthma) is a temporary narrowing of the lower airways, occurring after vigorous exercise. While EIB can occur without asthma, up to 90% of people with asthma experience EIB.

### **Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan**

An individual plan for each student at risk of asthma, developed in consultation with the student's parents. The Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan includes the Asthma Action Plan which describes the student's triggers, symptoms, and the emergency response to administer the student's reliever medication should the student display symptoms of an asthma attack.

### **Reliever Medication**

Medication, approved for use by the Commonwealth Government Therapeutic Goods Administration, which can be used to treat a person experiencing an asthma attack. These may include Salbutamol, Bricanyl and Symbicort.

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **Principal**

Section 9 of the Guidelines sets out the suggested role and responsibilities of the Principal. The Principal will:

- ensure that the School develops, implements and routinely reviews this policy in accordance with the Guidelines
- actively seek information to identify students with severe life-threatening asthma or those who have been diagnosed with asthma, either at enrolment or at the time of diagnosis (whichever is earlier)
- ensure that parents/carers provide an Asthma Action Plan which has been signed by the student's medical practitioner and that contains an up-to-date photograph of the student
- ensure that an Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan is developed in consultation with the student's parents/carers for any student that has been diagnosed by a medical practitioner with asthma, where the School has been notified of that diagnosis
- ensure students' Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plans are communicated to staff
- ensure that parents/carers provide the School with reliever medication and a spacer device, if reliever is a puffer, for their child that is not out-of-date and replacement reliever medication when requested to do so
- ensure that an appropriate Communication Plan is developed
- ensure there are procedures in place for providing information to school volunteers and casual relief staff about students diagnosed with asthma and their role in responding to a student having an asthma attack in their care
- ensure that relevant school staff have successfully completed approved asthma training and that their accreditation is current
- ensure that there are sufficient numbers of trained staff available to supervise students diagnosed with asthma while they are under the care or supervision of the School, including excursions, yard duty, camps and special event days
- ensure that all school staff are briefed at least annually by [OPTIONAL: Asthma Supervisor or another] appropriately trained staff member
- allocate time, such as during staff meetings, to discuss, practice and review this policy
- encourage ongoing communication between parents/carers and school staff about the current status of the student's asthma, the School's policies and their implementation
- ensure that the student's Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan and this policy are reviewed as required
- ensure the Risk Management Checklist for asthma is completed annually
- arrange to purchase and maintain an appropriate number of Asthma Emergency Kits for general use to be part of the School's first aid kit.

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **Staff**

Section 9 of the Guidelines sets out the suggested role and responsibilities of staff. The School staff will:

- know and understand the requirements of this policy
- know the identity of students who are diagnosed with asthma and know their face
- understand the causes, symptoms, and treatment of asthma
- obtain regular in how to recognise and respond to an asthma attack, including administering reliever medication
- know where to find a copy of each student's Asthma Action Plan quickly, and follow it in the event of an asthma flare-up/attack
- know the School's general first aid and emergency response procedures, and understand their role in relation to responding to a severe or life-threatening asthma attack
- know where students' reliever medication and the Asthma Emergency Kits for general use are kept
- know and follow the prevention and risk minimisation strategies in the student's Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan
- plan ahead for special class activities (e.g. cooking, art and science classes), or special occasions (e.g. excursions, incursions, sport days, camp, cultural days, fetes and parties), either at the school, or away from the school
- be aware of the possibility of hidden triggers in art supplies, traces of triggers when using items such as paint cleaning chemicals in art or food additives in cooking classes, or students being at risk of an asthma attack when they experience extreme emotions induced at school (e.g. stress during exams)
- raise student awareness about asthma and the importance of their role in fostering a school environment that is safe and supportive for their peers.

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **Parents/Carers**

Section 9 of the Guidelines sets out the suggested role and responsibilities of parents/carers of students diagnosed with asthma.

Parents/carers of students diagnosed with asthma will:

- inform the School in writing, either at enrolment or diagnosis, of the student's asthma
- obtain and provide the School with an Asthma Action Plan from the student's medical practitioner that details their condition, and any medications to be administered, and other emergency procedures
- inform school staff in writing of any changes to the student's medical condition and if necessary, provide an updated Asthma Action Plan
- provide the School with an up-to-date photo for the student's Asthma Action Plan and when the plan is reviewed
- meet with and assist the School to develop the student's Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan, including risk management strategies
- provide the School with reliever medication and spacer device, where the medication is administered by a puffer, that are current and not expired
- replace the student's reliever medication as needed, before their expiry date or when used
- assist school staff in planning and preparation for the student prior to camps, field trips, incursions, excursions or special events (e.g. class parties, cultural days, fetes or sport days)
- inform school staff in writing of any changes to the student's emergency contact details
- participate in reviews of the student's Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan.

### **Worker Responsibilities**

All workers must follow the asthma management requirements set out in this policy.

### **Signage**

Copies of the Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan and Asthma Action Plan for each student with asthma are displayed in various locations around the School.

Refer to Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan.

### **Implementation**

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training and supervision
- Maintenance of medical records
- Implementation of prevention strategies
- Effective incident notification procedures
- Effective communication procedures with the student's parents/carers
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.
- Discipline for Breach of Policy

Where a staff member breaches this policy St Joseph's may take disciplinary action.

### **Related Policies**

- **Student Duty of Care (Summary)**
- **Allergy Awareness**
- **Bites and Stings**
- **Critical Incident (Emergency Situations) Response**
- **First Aid**
- **Management of Students at Risk of Anaphylaxis**
- **Medication Administration**
- **Needles and Syringes**
- **Medical Records (Student)**
- **Disability Discrimination**

**Related Documents**

- Victorian Asthma Action Plans
- Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan Template
- Facilitator Guide for Asthma Management
- Asthma Management Briefing Presentation
- Annual Risk Management Checklist
- Prevention Strategies for Schools

**Key Reference**

This policy has been developed having regard to the Asthma Guidelines for Victorian Schools.