

Teacher guidance

KS2 Asthma



This guidance sheet is designed to support teachers who are new to teaching basic first aid using our first aid resources. Before delivering any first aid skills, teachers must feel confident that they have the relevant knowledge and competency to safely teach the required techniques.

The content of this guide covers the triggers of an asthma attack, how to recognise if somebody is suffering an asthma attack, and how to treat a casualty who is suffering an asthma attack. In addition, there is some further information that may be useful to support the successful delivery of our asthma sessions.

Please note that due to the possibility that a casualty who is suffering an asthma attack may become unresponsive and not breathing normally, it is advised that pupils are taught the basic life support topic prior to this session.

TRIGGERS OF AN ASTHMA ATTACK

Asthma attacks the passages which carry air into and away from the lungs. Asthma is a potentially life-threatening illness, as in severe cases it can lead to an insufficient intake of oxygen. These irritants, more commonly known as triggers, include:

- ▶ Pollen
- ▶ Animal fur
- ▶ Feathers
- ▶ Exercise
- ▶ Smoke
- ▶ Dust
- ▶ Common illnesses such as cold and flu can also affect asthma, which may be worse at night.

RECOGNITION

A casualty who is suffering from an asthma attack may present one or more of the following signs or symptoms:

- ▶ Difficulty breathing and/or talking
- ▶ Wheezing
- ▶ Distress and anxiety
- ▶ Coughing
- ▶ Grey-blue skin
- ▶ In the most severe cases, the casualty may become exhausted, unresponsive and stop breathing.

TREATMENT

The aim of treatment for somebody suffering an asthma attack is to ease breathing and get medical help, if necessary.

1. Remain calm and reassure the casualty. Get them to **take a dose of their inhaler**, using a spacer if necessary. This should relieve the asthma attack within a few minutes
2. Encourage the casualty to keep taking **slow and deep breaths**
3. Allow the casualty to get themselves into a **comfortable position**. Commonly this is a seated position. Do not force them to lie down
4. A mild asthma attack should ease within a few minutes. If not, then assist the casualty in taking **another dose of their inhaler** (one or two puffs) and continue to **use the inhaler every two minutes** until they have taken ten puffs
5. If the casualty's condition worsens, they are becoming exhausted and struggling to talk, or their inhaler has had no effect **dial 999 or 112** for emergency help
6. Continue to assist the casualty to take one to two puffs of their inhaler every two minutes, until emergency help arrives
7. If the casualty becomes unresponsive at any point, open their airway, and check for breathing:
 - If the casualty is breathing normally **place them in the recovery position** and continue to monitor breathing while waiting for help to arrive.
 - If the casualty is not breathing **perform CPR**.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- In a person who is asthmatic, the airways which carry air to and away from the lungs are naturally narrower than those of somebody who does not suffer from asthma. During an asthma attack, the airways constrict even further, making it increasingly difficult to take air to the lungs
- There are two common types of medication for somebody who suffers asthma, both delivered by an inhaler
- A reliever inhaler (usually blue or with a blue cap) is used immediately to relieve the symptoms of asthma. This is the inhaler that should be given when somebody is suffering an asthma attack, as per the treatment steps above
- A preventer inhaler (usually brown or with a brown cap) is used daily to help to prevent an asthma attack from occurring
- Children (and some adults) may use a plastic diffuser or spacer fitted to their inhaler so that they can breathe in the medication more effectively.