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Asthma

What you need to know



When a person with asthma comes into contact with something that irritates their airways (an asthma trigger), the muscles around the walls of the airways can tighten so that the airways become narrower and the lining of the airways becomes inflamed and starts to swell.

Sometimes sticky mucus or phlegm builds up which can further narrow the airways. All these reactions cause the airways to become narrower and irritated - making it difficult to breath and leading to symptoms of asthma.

5.4m people in the UK are currently receiving treatment for asthma. 1.1m children in the UK are currently receiving treatment for asthma.

There is a person with asthma in one in five households in the UK.

Problem Areas

A trigger is anything that irritates the airways and causes the symptoms of asthma. Everyone's asthma is different and a sufferer may have several triggers. An important aspect of controlling their asthma is avoiding their triggers.

It can be difficult to identify exactly what triggers their asthma. Sometimes the link is obvious, for example when their symptoms start within minutes of coming into contact with a cat or dog. But some children can have a delayed reaction to an asthma trigger, so some extra detective work may be needed.

Asthma triggers can include animals, air pollutants, cold and viral infections, emotions, exercise, food, hormones, house-dust mites, medicines, mould and fungi, pollen, smoking and even the weather.



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Support Strategies For Your Group

While it is impossible to completely prevent a young person with asthma from coming into contact with triggers, it is important to know what to do if a child has an asthma attack.

An asthma sufferer is having an asthma attack if any of the following happen:

- Their reliever inhaler does not help symptoms.
- Their symptoms are getting worse (cough, breathlessness, wheeze or tight chest).
- They are too breathless to speak, eat or sleep.

The following guidelines are suitable for both children, young people, and adults and are the recommended steps to follow in an asthma attack (unless they are on a SMART or MART regime):

- Help them to take their reliever inhaler (usually blue), immediately.
- Sit them down and ensure that any tight clothing is loosened. Do not lie them down.
- If there is no immediate improvement during an attack, continue to get them to take one puff of their reliever inhaler every 30-60 seconds for up to 10 puffs or until symptoms improve.
- If they feel worse, their symptoms do not improve after 10 puffs, or you are in any doubt, call 999 urgently. Inform parents/carers immediately.
- If the ambulance is taking longer than 15 minutes, repeat the reliever inhaler every 30-60 seconds.
- If available, make sure you give medical staff details of their medicines.

Thanks to Asthma and Lung UK for much of the material used in writing this article.

Further Information

Asthma and Lung UK - www.asthmaandlung.org.uk

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This resource is just one of the many ways we're here to walk with you!

Discover more free tools, training and resources to equip you in discipling young people.

urbansaints.org

This resource has been adapted from our *Invited to Belong Team Training Kit*.



If you're interested in helping your team become more aware and welcoming of young people with additional needs, you can explore our *Invited to Belong Team Training Kit* at urbansaints.org/resources.

The original content of this resource was created in partnership with **Youthscape** as part of the Invited to Belong resource.