

Thunderstorm asthma: Supporting students

Thunderstorms have been linked to epidemics of asthma, especially at the end of Spring, when grasses are flowering.

An asthma attack can be life threatening. Anyone experiencing wheezing, chest tightness and difficulty breathing should call 000.

Anyone with a known history of asthma is at risk of experiencing an exacerbation of their usual symptoms at this time.

In addition, people who do not usually experience symptoms of asthma but have a history of allergies may be at increased risk.

The common signs of asthma are difficulty in breathing (gasping for air), chest tightness and wheezing.

If a child's condition is deteriorating, parents or guardians should seek urgent care. Signs of rapid deterioration include little or no relief from a reliever inhaler, inability to speak comfortably, or lips turning blue.

People with asthma should continue to use their usual medications. Where possible, stay inside when the weather is windy with high pollen counts or dust.

Actions required

If a child is experiencing symptoms, notify their parents immediately (if you require advice, call Nurse on Call in the first instance, 1300 606 024).

If the child's symptoms include wheezing, chest tightness and difficulty breathing, call 000.

For any child having an asthma attack, follow the instructions in their Asthma Care Plan (required for any child who has asthma, under the Department's asthma policy). If an Asthma Care Plan is

not available, follow the four-step asthma first aid, which is:

1. Sit the person upright and give reassurance – do not leave them alone.
2. Without delay, give the person four separate puffs of their blue/grey reliever medication (such as Airomir, Asmol, Bricanyl or Ventolin). If using a puffer (like Ventolin or Asmol), this should be taken one puff at a time through a spacer. Ask the person to take four breaths from the spacer after each puff of medication.
3. Wait four minutes. If there is little or no improvement, repeat steps 2 and 3.
4. If there is still no improvement, call 000 for an ambulance immediately. Repeat steps 2 and 3 continuously while waiting for the ambulance to arrive.

Additional information

For details of schools' requirements to support students with asthma, see:

- [School Policy and Advisory Guide: Asthma](#)

For more information and resources in supporting asthma sufferers, see:

- [Asthma Australia](#)
- [Better Health Channel](#)
- [School Policy and Advisory Guide: Asthma attacks treatment](#)

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