Asthma Management in the Classroom:
What Teachers Need to Know

Contents
- Why Do We Have to Know About Asthma?
  - NJ Law and Asthma
  - Other Laws that Affect Students with Asthma
- What is Asthma?
  - What Happens During an Asthma Episode?
  - What Kind of Medication is Given?
- The PACNJ Asthma Treatment Plan
- What are Triggers?
- Common Asthma Triggers in the Classroom
  - Allergens
  - Indoor Air Quality Triggers
  - Other Triggers
- What Can a Teacher Do to Control Exposure to Classroom Triggers?
- Common Outdoor Asthma Triggers
- What Can a Teacher Do about Exposure to Outdoor Triggers?
- PACNJ Asthma Friendly School Award
- Resources, Websites, Disclaimers, Credits

Why Do We Have to Know About Asthma?

Because students who have their asthma in good control:

- Miss FEWER Days of School

Developed by Carol V. McGotty, RN, MS
Produced by
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This program has been reviewed and endorsed by the New Jersey State School Nurses Association
Have an IMPROVED Quality of Life

And are BETTER Learners…

You Can Make a Difference!

New Jersey Law and Asthma

NJSA 18A:40-12.9 requires annual asthma education opportunities for all teaching staff

NJSA 18A:40-12.3 of the state law allows for self-administration of medication by a pupil with asthma under specific conditions

Some of your students may be carrying an inhaler and need to use it during your class
NJSA 18A:40-12.8 calls for a written asthma treatment plan for pupils requiring asthma medication at school.

Other Laws that Affect Students with Asthma

FERPA & Asthma
The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) allows for health information to be shared with teachers and other school officials for “legitimate educational purposes” without written consent in accordance with school policy.

Questions from OTHER staff members regarding the health condition of your student should be referred to the school nurse.

IDEA, Section 504 and Asthma
The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 require arrangements to be made to include all students, even those with disabilities like asthma, to participate in all the educational experiences.

This impacts the type of educational activities you develop for your class, including:
- Field trips
- Outdoor experiences
- Learning about animals
- Using chemicals with strong odors

NJ Public Employees’ Occupational Safety & Health Act (NJPEOSH)
N.J.S.A 34:6A-25 et seq. provides for the development and enforcement of occupational safety standards for public employees throughout the state to encourage employers and employees in their efforts to improve the working environment.
NJ Law & Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)

N.J.A.C. 12:100.13 from the NJIAQ Standard covers indoor air quality in existing buildings occupied by public employees. This includes:

1. Ventilation
2. Microbial contamination
3. Remodeling/renovation issues including advance notice

Use the NJIAQ Standard to improve indoor air quality in your school

NJ PEOSH Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Designated Persons Training

• The updated NJ Indoor Air Quality Standard N.J.A.C. 12:100-13 now requires public employers to select and train a Designated Person
• NJ PEOSH provides the Designated Persons training and a certificate of attendance
• Know who the “IAQ Designated Person” is in your school
• This free training is now available for anyone who wants to know more about IAQ

NJ DEP No-Idling Pledge

NJ Law prohibits idling by diesel vehicles (most school buses and large trucks) for more than three minutes

NJ Law on No Smoking in Public Places

The New Jersey Smoke-Free Air Act, N.J.S.A. 26:D-55 et seq., (NJ SFAA) became effective April 15, 2006; the new law requires smokefree environments in essentially all indoor workplaces and places open to the public
Integrated Pest Management in Schools

N.J.A.C. 7:30-13 Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in Schools outlines an IPM plan for your school in accordance with the NJ Law on Pesticide Control Regulations

What is Asthma?

ASTHMA

- IS a long term (chronic) lung disease
- IS triggered by indoor and outdoor allergens and irritants
- CAN’T be cured
- CAN be controlled

If you have 30 children in a class, you may have at least 3 children with asthma

Combined NJBRFS results from the 2005-2006 NJBRFS indicate that approximately 313,379 children have a history of asthma (14.8%) and that approximately 218,914 children (10.3%) currently have asthma

What Happens During an Asthma Episode (Attack)?

The number of overnight hospital stays for asthma is:

- lowest for all age groups in July
- highest for children in May, September, October and November
Asthma affects the airways: the tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs

- Airways become inflamed/swollen
- Muscles tighten around the airways
- Mucus increases, blocking the airway
- Less air can get in and out

What are the Early Warning Signs of an Asthma Episode?

- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Mild wheeze
- Tight chest
- Exposure to a known trigger

Take action: Contact the school nurse if a student with asthma has any of the early warning signs

Your School Nurse will direct you according to the specific plan of action for this student

Never send a student to the health room alone or leave a student alone

What are the Signs of an Asthma Emergency?

- Chest sucking in/neck muscles bulging
- Difficulty or discomfort when breathing
- Nasal flaring
- Trouble walking and/or talking
- Breathing does not improve or is worse after quick reliever medication is used
This is an EMERGENCY

Initiate your school’s
“Emergency Response Plan”

TAKE ACTION: Call the school nurse

While You Wait for the School Nurse...

• Limit moving a student who is in severe distress.
  Go to the student instead
• Assist him/her to an upright position away from trigger, if possible
• Provide a calm, reassuring atmosphere and stay with the student
• The student should always be in an adult’s presence until medical care arrives

Be sure the student has self-administered medication if he/she is able to self-medicate

Know Your School Policy and Procedure Before You Need It!

Talk to your school nurse at the start of the school year about the Asthma Treatment Plans for your students with asthma
Help them avoid triggers
Be ready! Check with your school nurse to:

- Identify the students in your class with asthma
- Know their indoor and outdoor triggers
- Have a plan of action to respond quickly when you notice the early warning signs

1. Bronchodilators – (Quick Relief)
   These are used to stop an asthma episode (wheezing, coughing) before it gets worse

   *You should begin to see some relief immediately. It will take 15-20 minutes for the full effect.

2. Anti-Inflammatory - (Long Term Control)
   These are taken daily to control asthma and prevent asthma episodes

   *They take effect over a period of time and are continued even when the person feels well

The Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey (PACNJ)
Asthma Treatment Plan

Your school nurse has a 24-hour written asthma treatment plan for students with asthma, completed by their health care providers
It indicates what medicines the student takes on a daily basis to control asthma.

It identifies the student’s specific triggers.

It indicates if the student is capable and approved to self-medicate.

And it indicates what medicines the student should take when his/her asthma is getting worse, and what to do in an emergency.

What are “Triggers”? 

Triggers are things that can make asthma worse and cause an asthma episode.

Each person has different triggers, but there are common asthma triggers that a teacher can address to make the classroom healthier for all.

Avoiding asthma triggers is an important step in controlling asthma.
Common Asthma Triggers in the Classroom

Allergens

Dust and dust mites

Furry and feathered animals like cats, dogs, gerbils, guinea pigs and birds

Mold and mildew

Pests, like cockroaches and mice
Food allergies

Indoor Air Quality Triggers

Strong odors or fragrances

Poor ventilation

Temperature and humidity problems

Tobacco smoke
Other Triggers

- Respiratory illness or infection

Exercise

- Sports or physical education

Strong physical expressions of feelings

What Can a Teacher do to Control Exposure to Classroom Triggers?
Reduce exposure to dust and dust mites

Reduce classroom clutter - stacks of books, paper, and cardboard boxes
Utilize covered bins for classroom materials to make cleaning easier

Avoid area rugs, upholstered furniture and plants which are reservoirs for dust, mold and other allergens

Avoid furry or feathered pets in the classroom

Pet dander, saliva, feathers, pet feces and urine all contain the allergens that can trigger asthma and skin rashes

These allergens are transported to other rooms through the school's ventilation system and cannot be isolated to one room

Identify other ways to bring in educational experiences with animals that limit exposure to pet allergens
Check your district/school policy regarding live animals in the classroom

Report leaks, odors, and mold problems

Know the protocol for reporting problems in your building

Follow your school policy to report leaks, odors, mold, or other environmental conditions to your building administrators and your maintenance staff

Clean up small spills promptly and report large spills to maintenance staff

Know your IAQ Designated Person

Follow Procedures to Reduce Pest Infestation
Minimize eating in the classroom

Food stored in the classroom should be in sealed containers
Clean up crumbs promptly
See that food waste is removed daily

Do not spray pesticides
Report pest problems to maintenance staff so they can implement Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies

What is IPM?

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is the use of pest control methods that minimize hazards to people, property, and the environment

IPM is a safer, less costly option for effective pest management
An informative web page on the New Jersey School IPM Program can be viewed online at:
http://www.state.nj.us/dep/enforcement/pcp/pcp-ipm.htm

To learn more about IPM go to:
www.epa.gov/pesticides/food/ipm.htm
Follow your school IPM plan
Use low-odor instructional supplies

Be aware that strong odors from art projects, science projects, markers and other instructional tools can trigger asthma

Use supplies and products that are non-toxic, district approved, and have an MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet) on file if required

Eliminate chemical fumes and fragrances

- Avoid use of aerosol products, “air fresheners” and personal care products

- Use only products that are district/school approved for use and be sure there is an MSDS on file if required

- Be aware that aerosols and strong odors can trigger breathing problems in, and rashes on sensitive individuals

Go “Green” - use approved natural cleaning products

Do not bring in your own cleaning materials

Low odor and low toxicity cleaning supplies should be provided by your school in compliance with your IAQ program
Control temperature and humidity

Keep air vents clear of furniture, piles of books or other stored items

Follow the NJIAQ Standard Guidelines on acceptable room temperature and humidity levels

Prevent allergic food reactions

Consult with your school nurse early in the school year regarding foods that trigger life-threatening food allergies and asthma in students

Common Outdoor Asthma Triggers

Exercise
Pollen, ozone, and irritants such as pollution and exhaust fumes

Weather changes

Although exercise and outdoor activities are strongly encouraged…

For students with asthma:
Check with your school nurse to determine what the health care provider recommended on the student’s Asthma Treatment Plan regarding exercise and physical activity
Some students may need to take asthma medication prior to exercise

Reduce exposure to pollen, ozone, and other irritants

1. Before planning an outdoor activity check the Air Quality Index for your geographic area
2. Try to plan an alternate indoor activity if the air quality is poor for the day
Where Do I Find the Air Quality Index (AQI) Information?

Index Legend
- Green—Good
- Yellow—Moderate
- Orange—Unhealthy For Sensitive Groups
- Red—Unhealthy
- Maroon—Very Unhealthy
- Dark Brown—Hazardous
- Gray—No Index Data

All students, especially those with asthma, need to limit time outdoors on:
- High ozone days
- High pollen count days
- Hot and humid days
- Cold, windy days

Hot temperature and humidity
Hot, humid air and wet weather encourage the growth of mold spores
In certain areas, heat and sunlight combine with pollutants to create ground-level ozone

Cold dry air
Cold dry air irritates airways and can quickly cause severe symptoms.
People with exercise-induced asthma who participate in winter sports are especially susceptible.
Dry, windy weather can stir up pollen and mold.

What about planning a party or a field trip?
Both state and federal laws require accommodations to be made so all students, even those with disabilities like asthma, can participate in all the educational experiences.
Talk with your school nurse to ensure compliance with the New Jersey Law and the Federal Laws.
Work with your school nurse when planning parties and field trips.
Avoiding asthma triggers is an important step to controlling asthma

How can I remember all of these recommendations?

The Pediatric Adult/Asthma Coalition of NJ makes it easy to remember

These recommendations are summarized on their "Kids Learn Better in a Clean and Healthy School" Top Ten List

And See the “Top Ten List” for Administrators and Maintenance Staff

All 3 are available from the PACNJ website at http://www.pacnj.org/schools.html

When a student’s asthma is well controlled, the student...

• Participates in all activities
• Is not constantly coughing
• Has minimal side effects from medications
• Uses a quick reliever medication no more than 2 times per week, unless needed before exercise
• Has no hospitalizations or emergency room visits due to asthma
Promote a total healthy school environment

Serve on your school's indoor air quality team to develop a regular program that promotes a healthy school environment

Are you ready? Have you checked with your school nurse to:

1. Identify the students in your class with asthma?
2. Discuss their asthma triggers?
3. Develop a plan of action to respond quickly when you notice the early warning signs?

PACNJ Asthma Friendly School Award

By participating in this training, you have helped your school meet one of the Six Steps for Success to qualify for the PACNJ Asthma Friendly School Award
Other criteria include:
- Asthma management training for school nurses
- An Indoor Air Quality team in each school
- School administration signs a NJDEP no-idling pledge for school buses:
  http://www.stopthesoot.org/sts-pledge.htm

Remember…

Asthma
IS a long term (chronic) lung disease
IS triggered by indoor and outdoor allergens and irritants
CAN’T be cured
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Resources for More Information

• PACNJ Website (www.pacnj.org) for:
  - Asthma Treatment Plan and Patient/Parent Instructions
  - Kids Learn in a Clean and Healthy School and Top Ten Lists for Teachers, Administrators and Maintenance Staff
  - Top Ten Cards for Controlling Asthma Triggers in the Home
• National Asthma Education and Prevention Program
  - NAEPP School Asthma Education Subcommittee & NASN
  - Is the Asthma Action Plan Working?
  - A tool for school nurse assessment

Reilly, D. NASN. Managing Asthma Triggers: Keeping Students Healthy: Air Quality Issues (an NASN training program for school nurses)
Go To These Websites For More Information on Asthma

www.pacnj.org
www.aanma.org
www.epa.gov/pesticides/food/ipm.htm
www.epa.gov/iaq (Tools for School)
www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/bulletins.html (Electronic bulletins and updates on IAQ)
www.healthyschools.org
www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/asthma/index.shtml
www.pacnj.org

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Information in this publication is not intended to diagnose health problems or take the place of medical advice. For asthma or any medical condition, seek medical advice from your child’s or your health care professional.

This program does not represent a certification program in asthma management in the classroom, but is designed to present guidelines for school personnel in New Jersey. The Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey and all parties to or associated with the production of this program, disclaims any responsibility for any action taken by viewers as a result of their interpretations of information provided.

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