Faculty Handout

Asthma Management in the Classroom: What Teachers Need to Know

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Contents

- Why Do We Have to Know About Asthma?
- New Jersey Law and Asthma
  - Other Laws that Affect Students with Asthma
- What is Asthma?
  - Definition and Season Hospital Discharges
  - What Happens During an Asthma Episode (Attack)?
  - What are the Early Warning signs of an Asthma Episode?
  - Take Action: Contact the School Nurse if a Student Has Any of the Early Warning Signs
  - What are the Signs of an Asthma Emergency?
  - This is an EMERGENCY
  - Know Your School Policy and Procedure Before You Need It!
  - Be Ready! Check with Your School Nurse to:
    - What Kinds of Medications are Given?
- The PACNJ Asthma Treatment Plan
- What are “Triggers?”
  - Common Asthma Triggers in the Classroom
  - What Can a Teacher do to Control Exposure to Classroom Triggers?
  - Common Outdoor Asthma Triggers
  - What About planning a Party or a Field Trip?
- Avoiding Asthma Triggers is an Important Step to Controlling Asthma
  - How Can I Remember All of These Recommendations?
  - When A Student’s Asthma is Well-Controlled, the Student…
  - Promote a Total Healthy School Environment
  - Are You Ready? Have You Checked with Your School Nurse to…
- PACNJ Asthma Friendly School Award

Resources for More Information, Disclaimers, Credits

This program has been reviewed and endorsed by the New Jersey State School Nurses Association
Why Do We Have to Know About Asthma?

Because students who have their asthma in good control:

- Miss fewer days of school
- Have an IMPROVED Quality of Life
- And are BETTER Learners… You can make a difference

NJ 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

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA allows for health information to be shared with teachers and other school officials without written consent for "legitimate educational purposes" in accordance with school policy. Questions from OTHER staff members regarding the health condition of your student should be referred to the school nurse.

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504

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 (NJ PEOSH)

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:

- Ventilation
- Microbial contamination
- Remodeling/renovation issues including advance notice
- Use the NJIAQ Standard to improve indoor air quality in your school
NJ PEOSH Indoor Air Quality Standard Designated Persons Training

N.J.A.C. 12:100-13 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
- Free training is 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.

The New Jersey Smoke-Free Air Act (NJ SFAA)

N.J.S.A. 26:D-55 et seq. became effective April 15, 2006; the new law requires smoke free environments in essentially all indoor workplaces and places open to the public.

New Jersey School Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program

N.J.A.C. 7:30-13 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

Seasonal Hospital Discharges for Asthma, New Jersey, 2005-2006

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

What Happens During an Asthma Episode (Attack)?

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

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

What Kind of Medications are Given?

1. **Bronchodilators** – (quick relief) 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) medications 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”?

- 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
  o Pet dander, saliva, feathers, pet feces and urine all contain the allergens that can trigger asthma and skin rashes
  o These allergens are transported to other rooms through the school’s ventilation system and cannot be isolated to one room
  o Identify other ways to bring in educational experiences with animals that limit exposure to pet allergens
  o Check your district/school policy regarding live animals in the classroom

• Report leaks, odors, and mold problems
  o Know the protocol for reporting problems in your building
  o Follow your school policy to report leaks, odors, mold, or other environmental conditions to your building administrators and your maintenance staff
  o Clean up small spills promptly and report large spills to maintenance staff
  o Know your IAQ Designated Person

• Follow Procedure to Reduce Pest Infestation
  o Minimize eating in the classroom
  o Food stored in the classroom should be in sealed containers
  o Clean up crumbs promptly
  o See that food waste is removed daily
  o Do not spray pesticides
  o Report pest problems to maintenance staff to implement Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies

• What is IPM?
  o Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is the use of pest control methods that minimize hazards to people, property, and the environment
  o 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
  o To learn more about IPM go to: http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/food/ipm.htm
  o Follow your school IPM plan

• Use low-odor instructional supplies
  o Be aware that strong odors from art projects, science projects, markers and other instructional tools can trigger asthma
  o 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
  o Avoid use of aerosol products, “air fresheners” and personal care products
  o Use only products that are district/school approved for use and be sure there is an MSDS on file if required
  o Be aware that aerosols and strong odors can trigger breathing problems and rashes on sensitive individuals

• Go “Green” – use approved cleaning products
• Do not bring in your own cleaning materials
  o Low odor and Low toxicity cleaning supplies should be provided by your school in compliance with your IAQ program

• Control temperature and humidity
  o Keep air vents clear of furniture, piles of books or other stored items
  o Follow the NJIAQ Standard Guidelines on acceptable room temperature and humidity levels

• Prevent allergic food reactions
  o Consult with your school nurse early in the school year regarding the 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…
  o 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
  o Some students may need to take asthma medication prior to exercise

• Reduce exposure to pollen, ozone, and other irritants
  o Before planning an outdoor activity check the Air Quality Index for your geographic area
  o 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?
  o NJ AIRNow: www.njaqinow.net/Default.htm

• Index Legend for the Air Quality Index (AQI)
  o Green-Good
  o Yellow-Moderate
  o Orange-Unhealthy For Sensitive Groups
  o Red-Unhealthy
  o Maroon-Very Unhealthy
  o Dark Brown-Hazardous
  o Gray-No Index Data

• All students, especially those with asthma, need to limit time outdoors on:
  o High ozone days
  o High pollen count days
  o Hot and humid day
  o Cold, windy days
• Hot temperature and humidity
  o Hot, humid air and wet weather encourage the growth of mold spores
  o In certain areas, heat and sunlight combine with pollutants to create ground-level ozone

• Cold dry air
  o Cold dry air irritates airways and can quickly cause severe symptoms
  o People with exercise-induced asthma who participate in winter sports are especially susceptible
  o 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:

• Recommendations are summarized on *Kids Learn Better in a Clean and Healthy School* Top Ten Lists for:
  o Teachers, Staff & Students
  o Administrators
  o Maintenance Staff

• All 3 lists are available from the PACNJ website at [www.pacnj.org/schools.html](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 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/stspledge.htm

Remember...

Asthma:

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

Resources for More Information

The Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey (PACNJ): http://www.pacnj.org

- Asthma Treatment Plan and Patient/Parent Instructions: http://www.pacnj.org/plan.html
- Kids Learn in a Clean and Healthy School and Top Ten Lists for Teachers, Administrators and Maintenance Staff: http://www.pacnj.org/schools.html

Other Resources

Allergy & Asthma Network: http://www.aanma.org/


Healthy Schools Network: http://www.healthyschools.org/

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA): http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home

The Individuals with Disabilities Act, Section 504: http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/resources/factsheets/504.pdf

National Association of School Nurses. Managing Asthma Triggers (MAT), a training program for school nurses: http://www.nASN.org/Portals/0/education/flyermat.pdf


NJ AIRNow: http://www.njaqinow.net/Default.htm
NJ Asthma Awareness and Education Program: http://www.state.nj.us/health/hhs/asthma/index.shtml

NJ DEP No Idling Pledge: http://www.stopthesoot.org/


NJ PEOSH & Indoor Air Quality Standard: http://www.state.nj.us/health/ehp/peoshweb/peoshaq.htm

NJ Public Employees’ Occupational Safety & Health Act (NJ PEOSH): http://www.state.nj.us/health/ehp/peoshweb/

NJ School Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program: http://www.state.nj.us/dep/enforcement/pcp/ipm-laws2.htm

NJ Smoke-Free Air Act (NJ SFAA): http://www.njgasp.org/h_newact_intro.htm


Statistics on students with asthma: National Centers for Disease Control, Healthy You! Asthma:
http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/Asthma/


US EPA Indoor Air Quality: http://www.epa.gov/iaq/


Disclaimers
The Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey, sponsored by the American Lung Association in New Jersey, and this publication are supported by a grant from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS), with funds provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (USCDCP) under Cooperative Agreement 1U59EH000491-01. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the NJDHSS or the USCDCP.

Although this document has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under Agreement XA97250908-2 to the American Lung Association in New Jersey, it has not gone through the Agency’s publications review process and therefore, may not necessarily reflect the views of the Agency and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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.

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This program does not represent a certification program in asthma management in the class room, but is designed to present guidelines for school personnel in New Jersey. The Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New, the American Lung Association in 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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Special thanks to Elizabeth Craft and the Paterson School Nurses for their help in reviewing this presentation and providing valuable feedback.
Special thanks Dr. Marguerite Leuze, Supervisor of the Newark Health Services, for her preview of the program and valuable feedback.
Some pictures taken from the American Lung Association in New Jersey video, “Asthma and Your Family.”
Some pictures taken from the PACNJ video, “Steps to Controlling Asthma in the Child Care Setting.”
Lung graphic on slide 32 taken from the NHLBI/NAEPP program, Asthma Basics for Schools, PowerPoint