

Asthma Management

The Hazard - Asthma Management

Asthma affects around 11% of Australian children and is one of the most common reasons for school absenteeism and hospital admission in school aged children.

Asthma attacks must be identified quickly and treated correctly to ensure the best outcome for students affected. Teachers and staff must be aware of the symptoms, triggers and best practice management of asthma so they can assist their asthmatic students while at school.

If you think a student may be having a severe asthma attack, call an ambulance and give the student blue reliever medication as described in the [Asthma First Aid Plan](#).

St Michael's Policy

St Michael's is committed to supporting students who suffer from asthma and assisting them to participate in all school activities. It is our policy that:

- We provide a clear set of guidelines for the management of asthma in our school. The guidelines in this policy have been developed having regard to the publications of the Asthma Foundation Australia;
- We establish procedures for responding to and dealing with students who have been diagnosed with asthma and procedures for responding to an asthma attack;
- We identify and, where possible, minimise asthma triggers identified on a student's health plan;
- Student medical records and Asthma Action Plans are communicated to relevant staff in a confidential manner, stored appropriately and updated yearly;
- Where possible, we encourage students with asthma to self-administer medication and keep it on their person at all times;
- We inform parents/carers as soon as possible of concerns regarding a student's asthma, particularly where it is limiting the student's ability to participate fully in all activities;
- Where necessary, we modify activities for the student with asthma in accordance with their needs;
- We provide education, support and resources for staff, parents/carers, students and the wider school community on asthma awareness;
- We place Asthma Emergency Kits - spacer device, Ventolin inhaler and Asthma First Aid Action Plan - in appropriate areas within the school and ensure staff know where to access them;
- Our staff are trained to provide Asthma First Aid and how to use the equipment and medication in our Asthma Emergency Kits; and
- We display emergency Asthma First Aid posters in key locations around the school.

Asthma Triggers

Triggers which may cause an asthma attack include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Colds and flus;
- Exercise;
- Smoke e.g. cigarette, wood fire smoke;
- Dust, pollens and allergens;
- Certain medications;
- Some foods or preservatives; and
- Sudden changes in the weather.

With the exception of exercise, asthma triggers should be avoided.

How to Recognise an Asthma Attack

The symptoms of asthma depend on whether the attack is mild, moderate or severe:

Mild Attack: Symptoms include: coughing, soft wheezing, minor trouble breathing.

Moderate Attack: Symptoms include: persistent coughing, loud wheezing, difficulty breathing, shortened sentences.

Severe Attack: Symptoms include: wheezing may be absent, distressed/anxious, pale/sweaty/blue lips, gasping for breath, few words per breath, sucking in of skin over ribs/throat.

Whether or not the student is known to have asthma, no harm is likely to result from giving reliever medication to someone without asthma.

If you think a student may be having an asthma attack, give blue reliever medication as described in the [Asthma First Aid Plan](#). Call an ambulance in emergency situations. (Refer to our [Accident Management Policy](#).)

Recognising Symptoms of Poorly Controlled Asthma

The following are indicators that a student's asthma is poorly controlled:

- Frequent absenteeism from school due to asthma;
- Students use their reliever medication more than 3 times per week to ease asthma symptoms (this does not include using their reliever before exercise);
- Tiredness/poor concentration; or
- Student is unable to exercise or play sport due to asthma.

If you recognise a student who may have poorly controlled asthma, consider informing the parents so that they can seek medical advice.

Asthma Management Procedures

St Michael's has developed the following work practices and procedures for managing asthma:

Asthma First Aid Plan

In an asthma emergency follow the student's Asthma Action Plan (if easily accessible) or the [Asthma First Aid Plan](#).

Maintenance of Medical Records

Parents are requested to notify St Michael's of all medical conditions including asthma, as well as any medication that a student is required to take on an ongoing basis.

Student medical records are maintained in accordance with our [Medical Records \(Student\) Policy](#) which includes a provision to ensure that St Michael's is regularly updated as to the status of existing medical conditions including asthma.

Asthma Action Plan

An Asthma Action Plan is a written set of instructions prepared in partnership with the student's doctor that helps students to manage their asthma at different times.

The student's Asthma Action Plan should help them to:

- Recognise worsening asthma symptoms;

- Start treatment quickly; and
- Seek the right medical assistance.

Early attention to worsening asthma may prevent students from having a serious attack. Staff should encourage the parents/carers of students to ask their doctor for a written Asthma Action Plan.

For every student with asthma there should be a written Asthma Action Plan provided to St Michael's.

The Asthma Action Plan should be stored appropriately and updated yearly. It should be communicated to relevant staff in a confidential manner.

Each staff member shall fulfil their agreed roles as documented in a student's Asthma Action Plan and the school shall inform parents as soon as possible of concerns regarding the student's health care.

Administering Prescribed Medication

Parents/carers of students who require prescribed asthma medication to be administered during school hours must notify the school of this requirement and collaborate with the school to work out arrangements for supply, administration and storage of the prescribed medication.

Students who have been diagnosed with asthma should carry their blue reliever medication at all times while at school in case they need to use it, particularly for an asthma emergency. The use of the blue reliever medication two days a week (not including before exercise) may be a sign that the asthma is not being well managed. Staff members should be alert for such usage and shall inform parents as soon as possible of concerns regarding the student's health care.

For more information, refer to our [Medication Administration Policy](#).

Asthma Emergency Kits

Asthma Emergency Kits can be purchased from the Asthma Foundation and reliever medication is available from pharmacies.

An Asthma Emergency Kit should contain:

- A disposable spacer (Lite Aire[®]);
- An in-date reliever medication;
- Alcohol swabs; and
- Instructions for use and cleaning.

St Michael's keeps Asthma Emergency Kits in the following locations:

Individual children's bags

First Aid Room (located in cupboard & individually labelled)

First aid bag (generic ventolin & spacers)

A record should be made in the medication log book located in the First Aid Room on each occasion the Asthma Emergency Kits are used.

Exercise Induced Attack

Exercise is important for health and development. Students with asthma should be encouraged to be active. With good management, most students with asthma can exercise normally.

Any sporting activity (except SCUBA diving) is suitable for students with asthma.

St Michael's staff need to be particularly alert for asthma symptoms when students are participating in sports carnivals or endurance events (e.g. cross country). Asthma Emergency Kits should be made available if required, and staff trained in asthma management should attend such events.

The following guidelines have been produced by the Asthma Foundation for dealing with Exercise Induced Asthma (EIA).

Before Exercise:

Students with exercise induced asthma should use their blue reliever or doctor recommended medication 5-20 minutes before exercising;

The student should always warm up before exercise or activity; and

The student should always carry or have their reliever medication close by in case it is needed.

During Exercise:

- If symptoms occur stop activity and take blue reliever or doctor recommended medication;
- Return to activity only if free of symptoms; and
- If symptoms reoccur, take blue reliever or doctor recommended medication and do not return to activity.

After Exercise:

- Cool down and be alert for asthma symptoms.

Exercise should only be avoided when the student is unwell or when symptoms of asthma are present. Always notify parents/carers of any asthma incident.

Workers' Responsibility

All workers are expected to:

- Be familiar with the school's asthma management policy;
- Know the students with asthma in their care;
- Know where the Asthma Emergency Kits are located in the school;
- Know how to implement First Aid treatment in the event of an asthma attack;
- Access students' written Asthma Action Plans as required;
- Know asthma triggers and how to recognise asthma symptoms;
- Know that use of a spacer with a puffer is more effective than puffer alone;
- Know that asthma puffers have an expiry date and ensure that a staff member has the responsibility for checking asthma puffers regularly; and
- Always inform parents/carers of an asthma incident.

Asthma is a serious condition. The Asthma Foundation of Australia provides training for school staff to understand and manage asthma and be able to administer Asthma First Aid.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training;

- The availability of Asthma Emergency Kits;
- Individual Asthma Action Plans;
- Effective incident notification procedures;
- Effective communication procedures;
- Allocation of the overall responsibility for this policy to a senior member of staff; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

Discipline for Breach of Policy

Where a staff member breaches this policy St Michael's may take disciplinary action.

Related Policies

[Accident Management](#)
[Medical Records \(Student\) Policy](#)
[Medication Administration Policy](#)