

What to do in an asthma attack

It is essential for people who work with children and young people with asthma to know how to recognise the signs of an asthma attack and what to do if they have an asthma attack.

What to do

- Keep calm
- Encourage the child or young person to sit up and slightly forward – do not hug or lie them down
- Make sure the child or young person takes two puffs of reliever inhaler (usually blue) immediately – preferably through a spacer
- Ensure tight clothing is loosened
- Reassure the child

If there is no immediate improvement

Continue to make sure the child or young person takes one puff of reliever inhaler every minute for five minutes or until their symptoms improve.

Call 999 or a doctor urgently if:

- The child or young person's symptoms do not improve in 5–10 minutes.
- The child or young person is too breathless or exhausted to talk.
- The child or young person's lips are blue.
- You are in doubt.

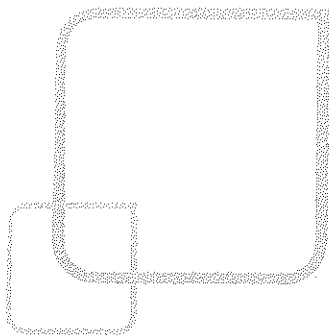
Ensure the child or young person takes one puff of their reliever inhaler every minute until the ambulance or doctor arrives.

Common signs of an asthma attack are:

- coughing
- shortness of breath
- wheezing
- tightness in the chest
- being unusually quiet
- difficulty speaking in full sentences
- sometimes younger children express feeling tight in the chest as a tummy ache.

After a minor asthma attack

- Minor attacks should not interrupt the involvement of a pupil with asthma in school. When the pupil feels better they can return to school activities.
- The parents/carers must always be told if their child has had an asthma attack.



Important things to remember in an asthma attack

- Never leave a pupil having an asthma attack.
- If the pupil does not have their inhaler and/or spacer with them, send another teacher or pupil to their classroom or assigned room to get their spare inhaler and/or spacer.
- In an emergency situation school staff are required under common law, duty of care, to act like any reasonably prudent parent.
- Reliever medicine is very safe. During an asthma attack do not worry about a pupil overdosing.
- Send another pupil to get another teacher/adult if an ambulance needs to be called.
- Contact the pupil's parents or carers immediately after calling the ambulance/doctor.
- A member of staff should always accompany a pupil taken to hospital by ambulance and stay with them until their parent or carer arrives.
- Generally staff should not take pupils to hospital in their own car. However, in some situations it may be the best course of action.
- Another adult should always accompany anyone driving a pupil having an asthma attack to emergency services.

NB: Guidance from education authorities on emergency transport in private vehicles is different in each part of the UK. Your school should have a clear emergency procedure policy on if and when this is appropriate.