

Asthma and Physical Activity

- **If a student's asthma is controlled, he/she can participate fully in any physical activity most of the time.** There are many famous athletes who have had asthma and have succeeded because they followed their asthma action plans.
- **Physical activity is important for good health** and should be controlled rather than avoided.
- **Exercise can be an asthma trigger** and vigorous exercise will cause asthma symptoms in most students with asthma if their asthma is not well controlled.
- Because asthma varies from student to student and season to season, **teachers and coaches need to understand asthma** and be aware of the triggers and the management plan for each student with asthma.
- Based on the knowledge of each student's asthma management plan and asthma triggers, at times, **programs for students with asthma may need temporary modification**, such as varying the type, length, and/or frequency of activity.
 - **Some common asthma triggers** include:
 - Running or playing hard – especially in cold weather
 - Upper respiratory infections
 - Laughing or crying hard
 - Allergens – pollen, animal dander, dust, mold, cockroach droppings
 - High levels of pollution or poor air quality
 - Irritants – cold air, strong smells, weather changes, cigarette and tobacco smoke.
- Remember that **students experiencing symptoms or who recently recovered** from an asthma episode **are at even greater risk for additional asthma problems.**
- Supporting and encouraging each student's efforts to follow his or her management plan is essential for the student's active participation in physical activities.
- **Teachers and administrators should know asthma symptoms and be prepared to administer first aid** for exercise-induced asthma based on students' asthma action plan.

Steps to take:

1. Know each child's triggers and follow their asthma action plan.
2. Ensure that physical education teachers have knowledge of asthma and can demonstrate asthma awareness and sensitivity as well as being very familiar with asthma symptoms and emergency procedures.
3. Ensure that students with asthma have convenient access to their medications.
4. Keep the student involved when any temporary modification is required.
5. Make sure that students have adequate warm-up and cool-down periods.

Adapted from "Asthma & Physical Activity in the School," National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; NIH; the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program, http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/asthma/phy_asth.pdf

Resources:

- American Lung Association, Asthma Friendly Schools Toolkit
<http://www.lungusa.org/site/apps/s/content.asp?c=dvLUK9O0E&b=34706&ct=67480>