

ASTHMA POLICY

RATIONALE:

Asthma affects up to one in four primary aged children, one in seven teenagers and one in ten adults. It is important for all staff members to be aware of asthma, its symptoms and triggers, and the management of asthma in a school environment.

AIM:

To manage students with asthma as effectively and efficiently as possible at school, following current best practice as set out by DET and Asthma Victoria.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Definition

- Asthma is a long term lung condition which can be life threatening. People will experience narrowing of airways making it difficult to breathe. Symptoms commonly include difficulty breathing, wheezy breathing, dry and irritating cough, tightness in the chest and difficulty speaking.
- Triggers can include: exercise, cold/flu, smoke, weather changes such as thunderstorms, freshly cut lawns and dust.
- Care must be provided immediately for any student who develops signs of an asthma attack.
- Children and adults with mild asthma rarely require medication; however severe asthma sufferers may require daily or additional medication (particularly after exercise).

Asthma Plans

- All students with asthma must have an up to date (annual) written Asthma Management Plan consistent with Asthma Victoria's requirements completed in consultation with their doctor or paediatrician. Appropriate Asthma Plan proformas are available at www.asthma.org.au or from the school nurse.
- Camp Asthma forms will be sent out 2 weeks prior to any camp. These need to be returned to school by the due date before camp. Any student with Asthma that does not return the completed Camp Asthma form will not be able to attend the camp. These forms provide us with the most current health information of the child with asthma prior to leaving for camp and are in addition to the everyday management plan.

Treatment

- Children suffering asthma attacks must be treated in accordance with their asthma plan.
- A student experiencing asthma symptoms does NOT require a care card to enter first aid and will be treated as a priority.
- Parents/caregivers are responsible for ensuring their children have an adequate supply of appropriate asthma medication (including a spacer) with them at school at all times.
- The delegated first aid staff member will be responsible for checking reliever puffer expiry dates.
- All spacers are individually used for only the specific student. Once a school supplied spacer has been used by a student it must be labelled with their name and parents/caregivers must replace or pay for a new device.
- If no plan is available children are to be sat down, reassured, administered 4 puffs of a shaken reliever puffer (blue canister) delivered via a spacer – inhaling 4 deep breaths per puff, wait 4 minutes, if necessary, administer 4 more puffs and repeat the cycle.
- An ambulance should be called **if there is no improvement** after the second 4 minute wait period, or if it is the child's first known attack.

Communication

- A first aid slip will be sent home if a student requires support for an asthma event, if the asthma event is an "attack" severe in nature or the first time a child experiences such symptoms the parent/caregiver will also be telephoned.
- At the start of each school year parents/caregivers will be asked to supply a current asthma plan, if a plan is not supplied the school nurse will send home a blank asthma plan to be completed in consultation with their medical practitioner as soon as possible. Until the plan is received first aid staff will follow standard asthma management plan as detailed by the Asthma Foundation.

Staff Training

- Professional development will be provided for all staff on the nature, prevention and treatment of asthma attacks. Such information will also be displayed on the staffroom and first aid room wall.
- An annual asthma briefing will be delivered to staff, as part of the whole school first aid and medical awareness briefing at the beginning of each school year, presented by the school nurse.
- Non accredited Asthma first aid management for education staff via online training is free through the Asthma Foundation, all staff are encouraged to do this 3 yearly.
- Accredited 3 yearly asthma training is recommended by DET for wellbeing staff such as school nurse, first aid officers, PE staff and camp organisers. eg Course 10392NAT Emergency Asthma Management or 22282VIC Management of Asthma Risks and emergencies in the workplace.

Equipment

- The school will provide and have staff trained in the administering of, reliever puffers (blue canister) such as Ventolin, Asmol and spacer devices in all first aid kits, including kits on excursions and camps. Clear written instructions on how to use these medications and devices will be included in each first aid kit, along with steps to be taken to treat severe asthma attacks. These kits are single use.
- Each student with asthma will supply their own reliever (blue puffer) and spacer clearly labelled. These will be kept in either first aid, classroom or school bag of the child. The decision where to keep the equipment is in consultation with parents/caregivers, teacher and school nurse, this will depend on need of access, age of student and triggers. Eg for a mild asthmatic it is better to keep centrally in first aid, for severe asthmatic it will need to be with them at all times, ensuring it goes to PE or sporting events.
- It is the classroom teacher and first aid officers (on the excursion) responsibility to ensure all asthma equipment is taken on excursions and camps.
- A minimum of 2 Asthma emergency kits are available and located in the first aid office and excursion first aid kit, consisting of single use spacer and reliever puffer, checked monthly and replaced if used.
- A nebuliser pump will not be used by the school staff unless a student's Asthma Management Plan recommends the use of such a device, and only then if the plan includes and complies with the Victorian Government School's Reference Guide – Asthma Medication Delivery Devices and such a device should be provided by the parent/caregiver.

Reducing Asthma Triggers

- Dust is kept to a minimum through the daily cleaning and regular dusting process as undertaken by our cleaning contractors.
- The mowing of lawns will be undertaken in consideration of weather conditions and will occur whilst students are in class, preferably before or after school hours.
- Plant a low pollen garden
- Carpets and curtains cleaned regularly
- Turn on fans and heaters out of hours when being used for the first time after a long period of non use.

- Monitor pollen count and weather patterns, being aware of severe weather warnings including thunderstorm asthma alerts and act as authorities suggest.

EVALUATION:

This policy shall be reviewed as part of the ongoing policy and process review.

REFERENCES:

The Victorian Schools Asthma Policy' revised July 2017

Victorian Government School's Reference Guide – Asthma Medication Delivery Devices

School Asthma Action Plan

Camp Asthma form

Asthma Management Plan

Findon First Aid Policy

Findon Medication Policy

www.asthma.org.au