

ASTHMA AND MISSING SCHOOL, PEDIATRIC



ALABAMA
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HEALTH

Children with asthma can face challenges in school. You can help your child overcome these challenges by taking steps to educate yourself, your child, your child's friends, and the adults at his or her school about your child's asthma. Doing this can provide the support that your child needs to help manage asthma symptoms and to stay safe while at school.

How can asthma affect my child in school?

Children who have asthma have a higher risk of missing school. Missing school puts your child at risk for:

- Poor school performance.
- Not being able to advance to the next grade with his or her classmates.
- Dropping out and not finishing school.

What actions can I take to manage my child's asthma while in school?

Communicate with the school

- Get permission for your child to carry as-needed medicine if he or she is older and responsible enough to use medicine as instructed.
- Get details about where the medicine is stored and who will give the medicine if your child is not able to carry it.
- Make a plan for the school to contact you or an emergency contact to let you know about problems or changes in your child's health.
- Tell school staff that your child has asthma. They need to know what substances or activities may trigger your child's asthma symptoms. Common asthma triggers include:
 - Foods or food additives.
 - Substances found indoors, such as mold, dust, and pet dander.
 - Conditions and substances found outdoors, such as chemicals in the air, pollen, and weather conditions.
 - Exercise.
 - Stress.
 - Illness.
- Talk with your child's health care provider and designated school staff about sharing your child's

health care information. You may want to sign a release that allows your child's health information to be shared.

Provide your child's school with a written asthma action plan

- Give your child's written asthma action plan (WAAP) to the school. The WAAP will:
 - Provide instructions on how to manage your child's asthma symptoms.
 - Tell them what changes to look for when your child's asthma symptoms start. Symptoms may include:
 - Trouble breathing.
 - Coughing.
 - Chest tightness.
 - Hearing a whistling noise with breathing (wheezing).
 - Tell them what asthma medicines your child takes and whether your child uses as-needed medicine for quick relief when asthma symptoms occur.
 - Tell them what to do if your child's symptoms do not get better and he or she needs to take medicine, such as a quick-relief (rescue) inhaler or breathing treatment (nebulizer).
 - Tell them what to do if your child continues to have trouble breathing after treatment.
 - Provide an emergency plan if your child's symptoms do not improve with treatment or become worse before your child can get treatment.
 - Provide your child's peak flow ranges that show how well your child is breathing and help determine how bad your child's asthma is when she or he is having breathing problems.
- Keep a peak flow meter at school to help manage your child's asthma when symptoms are not reliable.

Manage asthma flares at school

Asthma flares may occur when your child returns to school in the fall or after holiday breaks if there are allergens or triggers at school. If this happens:

- Help your child learn how to recognize that his or her asthma is getting worse and when he or she needs to ask someone for help.

- Talk to your child’s health care provider about making changes to your child’s WAAP to help gain control of his or her asthma.

Plan for activities

Planning for school activities can help your child avoid triggers that might cause asthma symptoms. Talk with school staff about:

- Scheduling physical education or exercise at a time when your child’s regular asthma medicine can help prevent symptoms.
- Making changes to your child’s field trips or outdoor activities. This is especially important on days when:
 - The weather could trigger your child’s asthma.
 - Pollen counts are high.
 - The air may contain smoke or other types of pollution.

Where to find more information

- American Lung Association: [lung.org](https://www.lung.org)
- Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America: [aafa.org](https://www.aafa.org)
- Allergy & Asthma Network: [allergyasthmanetwork.org](https://www.allergyasthmanetwork.org)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: [sites.ed.gov/idea](https://www.sites.ed.gov/idea)

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: [epa.gov](https://www.epa.gov)

Contact a health care provider if:

- Your child is missing school often because of his or her asthma.
- Your child’s asthma action plan is not working.
- Your child needs a new prescription for the quick-relief (rescue) inhaler, or the quick-relief inhaler is not working properly.
- Your child’s asthma seems to be getting worse.

Summary

- Children with asthma have a higher risk of missing school.
- Talking often with school staff about how to manage your child’s asthma can help your child stay safe while at school.
- Your child’s school should have a copy of your child’s written asthma action plan (WAAP) that explains the steps to manage his or her asthma in school.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.