

ASTHMA AND MISSING SCHOOL, TEEN



ALABAMA
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HEALTH

Teens with asthma can face challenges in school. You can overcome these challenges if you take steps to educate yourself, your friends, and the adults at school about your asthma. Doing this can help you get the support you need to manage your asthma symptoms and stay safe while you are in school.

How can asthma affect me in school?

Teens who have asthma have a higher risk of missing school. Missing school puts you at risk for:

- Poor performance in school.
- Not being able to advance to the next grade with your classmates.
- Dropping out and not finishing high school.

What actions can I take to manage asthma while in school?

Communicate with your school

- Tell school staff that you have asthma. Tell them about the substances or activities that may trigger your 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.
- Get permission to self-carry as-needed medicine, or provide details about who will give you your asthma medicine.
- Make a plan for the school to contact your parents or your emergency contact to let them know about problems or changes in your health.
- Talk with your health care provider and designated school staff about sharing your health care information. You may want to sign a release to allow sharing of your health information. Your parents may need to sign the release.

Provide your school with a written asthma action plan

- Give your written asthma action plan (WAAP) to the school. The WAAP will:

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

Manage asthma flares at school

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

- Learn how to recognize that your asthma is getting worse and when to ask someone for help.
- Talk with your health care provider about making changes to your WAAP to help gain control of your asthma.

Plan for activities

Planning for school activities can help you avoid triggers that might cause asthma symptoms.

- Schedule exercise or physical education at a time when your regular asthma medicine can help prevent symptoms.

- Discuss field trips or outdoor activities and make changes to your schedule when needed. Changes could be made when:
 - The weather could trigger your 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
- Allergy & Asthma Network: allergyasthmanetwork.org
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: sites.ed.gov/idea
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: epa.gov

Contact a health care provider if:

- You are missing school because of your asthma.
- Your action plan is not working.

- You need a new prescription for a quick-relief (rescue) inhaler, or your quick-relief inhaler is not working properly.
- Your asthma is getting worse.

Summary

- Teens who have asthma have a higher risk of missing school.
- Educate yourself, your friends, and the adults at school about your asthma. This can help you get the support you need to manage your asthma symptoms and stay safe while you are in school.
- Your school should have a copy of your written asthma action plan (WAAP) that explains the steps to manage your 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.