

POLICY

Asthma

Purpose:

To ensure Sunshine Special Developmental School (Sunshine SDS) appropriately supports students diagnosed with asthma.

To prepare staff and students, educate and implement strategies for thunderstorm Asthma.

Objective:

- To explain to Sunshine SDS parents/guardians, staff and students the processes and procedures in place to support students diagnosed with asthma and to educate SDS parents/guardians, staff about thunderstorm asthma.

Scope:

This policy applies to:

- all staff, including causal relief staff, contractors and volunteers
- all students who have been diagnosed with asthma or who may require emergency treatment for asthma or thunderstorm asthma and their parents/guardians.

Policy:

Asthma

Asthma is a long term lung condition. People with asthma have sensitive airways in their lungs which react to triggers, causing a 'flare-up'. In a flare-up, the muscles around the airway squeeze tight, the airways swell and become narrow and there is more mucus. This makes it hard to breathe. An asthma flare-up can come on slowly (over hours, days or even weeks) or very quickly (over minutes). A sudden or severe asthma flare-up is sometimes called an asthma attack.

Symptoms -

Symptoms of asthma can vary over time and often vary from person to person. The most common asthma symptoms are:

- breathlessness
- wheezing (a whistling noise from the chest)
- tight feeling in the chest
- persistent cough

Symptoms often occur at night, early in the morning or during/just after physical activity. If asthma is well controlled, a person should only have occasional asthma symptoms.

Triggers -

A trigger is something that sets off or starts asthma symptoms. Everyone with asthma has different triggers. For most people with asthma, triggers are only a problem when asthma is not well controlled with medication. Common asthma triggers include:

- exercise
- smoke (cigarette smoke, wood smoke from open fires, burn-offs or bushfires)
- house dust mites
- colds/flu
- weather changes such as thunderstorms and cold, dry air
- molds

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- pollens(**thunderstorm asthma**)
- chemicals such as household cleaning products
- food chemicals/additives
- laughter or emotions, such as stress
- animals such as cats and dogs
- deodorants (including perfumes, after-shaves, hair spray and aerosol deodorant sprays)
- certain medications (including aspirin and anti-inflammatories)

Preparing SSDS for thunderstorm asthma

Grass pollen season occurs between October and December. Schools are reminded of an increased risk of seasonal asthma, hay fever and epidemic thunderstorm asthma during this time.

Epidemic thunderstorm asthma events are triggered by an uncommon combination of high grass pollen levels and a certain type of thunderstorm, resulting in large numbers of people developing asthma symptoms over a short period of time.

People with a history of asthma, undiagnosed asthma or hay fever are at an increased risk of epidemic thunderstorm asthma during this time. Having both hay fever and asthma that are poorly managed increases the risk further.

The best way to reduce and prevent symptoms of asthma or hay fever and reduce unnecessary absences from school is to follow an up-to-date asthma action plan or hay fever treatment plan.

While it's important to increase outside air ventilation and move activities outside where possible in order to minimise the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission, schools should monitor the Vic Emergency App *and on days when there is a heightened risk of thunderstorm asthma, windows and doors should be closed and then reopened when the risk reduces.*

What can SSDS do?

To prepare for the grass pollen season, we can:

- review the Department's Asthma policy and your school's asthma policy, and ensure that appropriate staff are trained in asthma first aid
- ensure your school has an asthma emergency kit with in-date emergency reliever medication (available over the counter from a pharmacy without a prescription)
- ensure all students diagnosed with asthma have an up-to-date Asthma Action Plan in line with current recommendations, and a Student Health Support Plan, as well as a student asthma kit
- encourage staff or students with a history of seasonal hay fever symptoms to see a GP if they don't have a hay fever treatment plan
- keep asthma medication readily accessible
- download the VicEmergency app and create a 'watch zone' for epidemic thunderstorm asthma advice and warnings
- on days with a heightened risk of thunderstorm asthma, avoid being outside during thunderstorms and during wind gusts that come before a storm. Close doors and windows and turn air conditioners on to re-circulate air. Note that this measure is only to be used on days with heightened risk of thunderstorm asthma; at other times schools should be ventilating rooms with fresh air as much as possible, and not using the air conditioner on recirculate.
- encourage staff and students to manage hay fever and asthma symptoms – particularly important as the symptoms can be similar to coronavirus (COVID-19).

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Remain vigilant for coronavirus (COVID-19)

Don't assume symptoms are due to hay fever or asthma.

If staff or students experience symptoms such as fever, chills, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose, and loss or change of sense of smell or taste, that are different in any way to their usual hay fever or asthma symptoms, they should self-isolate immediately and test for coronavirus (COVID-19).

Find out more

For more information, refer to:

- [Asthma Australia](#) for a free online learning course about thunderstorm asthma
- [Better Health Channel](#) for more about epidemic thunderstorm asthma

Department [guidance about asthma attacks, cleaning asthma puffers and key information](#)

Asthma management

If a student diagnosed with Asthma enrolls at Sunshine SDS:

1. Parents/guardians must provide the school with an Asthma Action Plan which has been completed by the student's medical practitioner. The plan must outline:
 - the prescribed medication taken by the student and when it is to be administered, for example as a pre-medication to exercise or on a regular basis
 - emergency contact details
 - the contact details of the student's medical practitioner
 - the student's known triggers
 - the emergency procedures to be taken in the event of an asthma flare-up or attack.
2. Parents/guardians should also provide a photo of the student to be included as part of the student's Asthma Action Plan.
3. Original Asthma Action Plan is kept with the School nurse with copies given by the school nurse to:
 - Class room teacher for the student file
 - All specialist teachers
 - front office to update the student's digital file
 - If the student is travelling to and from school by bus, a copy of the Asthma Action Plan is given to the specific bus
4. Staff may also work with parents/guardians to develop a Student Health Support Plan which will include details on:
 - how the school will provide support for the student
 - identify specific strategies
 - allocate staff to assist the student

Any Student Health Support Plan will be developed in accordance with Sunshine SDS Healthcare Needs Policy.

5. If a student diagnosed with asthma is going to attend a school camp or excursion, Sunshine SDS parents/guardians are required to provide any updated medical information.
6. If a student's asthma condition or treatment requirements change, parents/guardians must notify the school and provide an updated Asthma Action Plan.

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7. School staff will work with parents/guardians to review Asthma Action Plans (and Student Health Support Plans) once a year.
8. At the beginning of each term, class staff will check reliever puffer expiry date and spacer. Register of expiry dates kept with school nurse.

Student asthma kit –

All students diagnosed with asthma are required to have a student asthma kit at school which is provided by the parents and contains:

- their own prescribed reliever medication labelled with the student's name
- their spacer (if they use one)

Student asthma kits will be stored in the student's bag. However, reliever medication for general use and disposable spacers are kept in the first aid room. In addition, each class has an asthma kit for general use in the red first aid bag.

Asthma emergency response plan

If a student is:

- having an asthma attack
- difficulty breathing for an unknown cause, even if they are not known to have asthma

School staff will endeavour to follow the Asthma First Aid procedures outlined in the table below. School staff may contact Triple Zero "000" at any time.

Step	Action
1.	Sit the person upright <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be calm and reassuring• Do not leave them alone• Seek assistance from another staff member or reliable student to locate the student's reliever, the Asthma Emergency Kit and the student's Asthma Care Plan (if available).• If the student's action plan is not immediately available, use the Asthma First Aid as described in Steps 2 to 5.
2.	Give 4 separate puffs of blue or blue/grey reliever puffer: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shake the puffer• Use a spacer if you have one• Put 1 puff into the spacer• Take 4 breaths from the spacer Remember – Shake, 1 puff, 4 breaths
3.	Wait 4 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If there is no improvement, give 4 more separate puffs of blue/grey reliever as above (or give 1 more dose of Bricanyl or Symbicort inhaler)
4.	If there is still no improvement call Triple Zero "000" and ask for an ambulance. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell the operator the student is having an asthma attack• Keep giving 4 separate puffs every 4 minutes until emergency assistance arrives (or 1 dose of Bricanyl or Symbicort every 4 minutes – up to 3 doses of Symbicort)
5.	If asthma is relieved after administering Asthma First Aid, stop the treatment and observe the student. Notify the student's emergency contact person and record the incident

Staff will call Triple Zero "000" immediately if:

- the person is not breathing
- if the person's asthma suddenly becomes worse or is not improving

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- if the person is having an asthma attack and a reliever is not available
- if they are not sure if it is asthma
- if the person is known to have anaphylaxis

General Training for staff

All school staff should undertake non-accredited training in asthma first aid management through Asthma Australia. Staff should complete the free 1-hour asthma education session every three years.

<https://asthma.org.au/what-we-do/asthma-in-schools/training-for-schools/>

Sunshine SDS will arrange the following face to face asthma management training for staff:

Staff	Completed by	Course	Provider	Cost	Valid for
All staff	Staff working with high risk children with a history of severe asthma, or with direct student wellbeing responsibility, (including nurses, PE/sport teachers, first aid and school staff attending camp)	<i>Course in Management of Asthma Risks and Emergencies in the Workplace</i> 22556VIC (accredited) face to face training or 10760NAT- Course in Asthma awareness	Any RTO that has this course in their scope of practice	Paid by Sunshine SDS	3 years

At the discretion of the principal, Sunshine SDS may conduct an annual briefing on:

- the procedures outlined in this policy
- the causes, symptoms and treatment of asthma
- identities of the students diagnosed with asthma
- how to use a puffer and spacer
- the location of:
 - the Asthma Emergency Kits
 - asthma medication which has been provided by parents for student use.

Volunteers and casual relief staff of students at risk of asthma will be informed by the Daily Organiser, Learning Centre Leader or classroom staff of the identity of these students with asthma.

Asthma emergency kits

Sunshine SDS will provide and maintain Asthma Emergency Kits in the following locations:

- each class's red first aid bag
- first aid room
- all school buses
- DET transport buses

A register of expiry dates of reliever medications are kept with school nurse.

In the event of an emergency within the school grounds, staff will call a Code Blue so to initiate emergency response.

The Asthma Emergency Kit will contain:

- at least 1 blue or blue/grey reliever medication such as Airomir, Asmol or Ventolin
- at least 2 spacer devices (for single person use only) to assist with effective inhalation of the blue or blue/grey reliever medication. Sunshine SDS will ensure spare spacers/disposable spacers are available as replacements.

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- clear written instructions on Asthma First Aid, including:
 - how to use the medication and spacer devices
- steps to be taken in treating an asthma attack
- A record sheet/log for recording the details of an asthma first aid incident, such as the number of puffs administered

The school nurse at Sunshine SDS will monitor and maintain the Asthma Emergency Kits by:

- ensure all contents are maintained and replaced where necessary
- regularly check the expiry date on the canisters of the blue or blue/grey reliever puffers and replace them if they have expired or a low on doses
- replace spacers in the Kits after each use (spacers are single-person use only)
- dispose of any previously used spacers.

The blue or blue/grey reliever medication in the Asthma Emergency Kits may be used by more than one student as long as they are used with a spacer. If the devices come into contact with someone's mouth, they will not be used again and will be replaced.

After each use of a blue or blue/grey reliever (with a spacer):

- remove the metal canister from the puffer (do not wash the canister)
- wash the plastic casing
- rinse the mouthpiece through the top and bottom under running water for at least 30 seconds
- wash the mouthpiece cover
- air dry then reassemble
- test the puffer to make sure no water remains in it, then return to the Asthma Emergency Kit.

Note:

SSDS is not required to provide a nebuliser for students. If a student is prescribed a nebuliser, they should bring their own to school.

Management of confidential medical information

Confidential medical information provided to Sunshine SDS to support a student diagnosed with asthma will be:

- recorded on the student's file
- shared with all relevant staff so that they are able to properly support students diagnosed with asthma and respond appropriately if necessary.

Communication plan

This policy will be available on Sunshine SDS's website so that parents/guardians and other members of the school community can easily access information about Sunshine SDS asthma management procedures.

Epidemic Thunderstorm Asthma

Sunshine SDS will be prepared to act on the warnings and advice from the Department of Education and Training when the risk of epidemic thunderstorm asthma is forecast as high.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- Asthma Foundation Victoria: [Resources for schools](#)
- School Policy and Advisory Guide:
 - [Asthma](#)
 - [Asthma Attacks: Treatment](#)
 - [Asthma Emergency Kits](#)
- Health Care Needs Policy
- Anaphylaxis Policy

Review Cycle and Evaluation

Asthma Policy

This policy will be evaluated as part of a 1 year cycle of policy review

Reviewed by D. Bascherini (RN Division 1) 5th April 2022

This policy was last updated on 5th April 2022 and is scheduled for review in March 2023

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Review Date: March 2023

'Sunshine SDS is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices heard about decisions that affect their lives'.

