



# Appendix 7 – Information Sheets Under 5's and Asthma

This information sheet is designed for parents and carers of children under the age of five.

Currently it is estimated that up to 2 in 5 children under the age of five experience asthma symptoms. Although asthma can be a serious and frightening illness that can affect a child's health and lifestyle, in most cases it can be well controlled if managed correctly.

## How should I manage my child's asthma?

It is important that you know as much as you can about your child's asthma. Your doctor, asthma educator, pharmacist or local Asthma Foundation will be able to help you achieve this. Points to help you manage your child's asthma include:

- Ask your doctor to write an Asthma Action Plan, to help you know how to manage your child's asthma.

In particular you should know:

What medication your child has been prescribed.

What dosage and how often medication is required for day to day management and ask your doctor to also give you instructions on the dose and frequency of medication for an asthma emergency

How to use a spacer (ask your doctor, asthma educator or pharmacist to check you are using it correctly)

- Know the severity of your child's asthma.

Doctors often use the words 'mild', 'moderate' and 'severe' to describe asthma. Three in every four children with asthma will have mild asthma. However it is important to be aware that a child with mild asthma can still have a severe attack if their asthma is not well managed.

- Learn how to recognise and avoid your child's 'triggers' wherever possible.

There are many things that may trigger asthma (eg colds and other respiratory infections, exercise, pollens, dust mites, pets). Your child may have one or more asthma triggers.

- Learn to recognise your child's asthma symptoms.

It is important to know what signs and symptoms your child experiences when they have asthma. Common symptoms include difficulty in breathing, chest tightness, wheezing, coughing, tiredness and difficulty speaking. Your child will not necessarily experience all of these symptoms.

By managing asthma correctly, severe attacks can usually be prevented.

**If you leave your child in the care of another person, they should know how to treat your child's day to day asthma and what to do in an asthma emergency.**

The points listed above provide useful guidelines for what carers need to know.

It is also important that you **teach your child about their own asthma** as soon as they are old enough to understand and encourage them to learn to take their medication independently.

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**Note:** An '**Asthma Action Plan**' is a useful tool to help you or another carer manage your child's asthma. The Asthma Action Plan is written specifically for your child by your doctor and should provide the following information:

- What triggers your child's asthma
- Details of medication taken when your child is well
- How to recognise and deal with worsening asthma,
- What to do in an asthma emergency.

### What responsibility does a childcare service have to my child?

Every childcare worker owes a 'duty of care' to the children in their care. Duty of care requires a person to assess the environment, group or situation for potential risks or risk situations and to take steps to minimise the possibility of injury, loss or damage to the person in their care. In short, the childcare service and staff should always be conscious of the health and safety of your child, including the management of their asthma.

### How can I minimise the risk of my child having a severe asthma attack while in childcare?

In order for a childcare service to effectively manage your child's asthma they need to be adequately informed.

### As a parent/guardian of a child with asthma you should:

- Inform the centre that your child has asthma.
- Provide a written Asthma Action Plan.

The Asthma Action Plan should include your child's triggers, symptoms, usual medications and steps that should be taken if an attack should occur. This information should be written in consultation with your child's doctor. Additional information such as emergency contacts and the name of your child's doctor should also be provided, along with written authorisation for staff to administer prescribed medication. It is useful if this information is provided on a standard form, these forms can be obtained from Asthma Victoria.

- Notify the centre if there are any changes to your child's usual asthma management.
- Show staff how to administer your child's medication, including how to use the medication devices (spacer and mask).
- Ensure that your child has an adequate supply of appropriate asthma medication at the centre at all times.

Communicate all important information to the centre as the need arises and tell staff if there are any concerns you may have.