



Asthma

POLICY

Rationale

According to Asthma Australia around 1 in 9 Australians have asthma, equating to about 2.7 million people. It is therefore important for all staff members to be aware of asthma, its symptoms and triggers, and to ensure that Cardinia Primary School appropriately supports students diagnosed with asthma.

Aim

- To explain the policies and procedures Cardinia Primary School has in place to support students diagnosed with asthma.

Scope

This policy applies to:

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

Definition

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; and/or
- 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.

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

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;
- colds/flu;
- smoke (cigarette smoke, wood smoke from open fires, burn-offs or bushfires);
- weather changes such as thunderstorms and cold, dry air;
- house dust mites;
- moulds;
- pollens;
- animals such as cats and dogs;
- chemicals such as household cleaning products;
- deodorants (including perfumes, aftershaves, hair spray and aerosol deodorant sprays);
- food chemicals/additives;
- certain medications (including aspirin and anti-inflammatories); and
- laughter or emotions, such as stress.

Implementation

- When a student diagnosed with asthma enrolls at Cardinia Primary School parents/carers 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; and
 - * the emergency procedures to be taken in the event of an asthma flare-up or attack.
- All Asthma Action Plans will be kept in the First Aid room for reference with the student's medical alert. A copy will also be kept with the student's asthma medication.
- Where the asthma is considered to be severe, school staff may also work with parents/carers to develop a Student Health Support Plan which will include details on:
 - * how the school will provide support for the student;
 - * identify specific strategies; and
 - * allocate staff to assist the student.

Any Student Health Support Plan will be developed in accordance with the school's *Health Care Needs Policy*.

- If a student diagnosed with asthma is going to attend a school camp or overnight activity, parents/carers are required to provide any updated medical information.
- If a student's asthma condition or treatment requirements change, parent/carers must notify the school and provide an updated Asthma Action Plan.

- The Department of Education and Training (DET) requires Asthma Action Plans to be completed/reviewed annually by a medical practitioner.
- Parents/carers need to ensure that the asthma medication their child has at school is within its expiry date. If school staff become aware that the asthma medication a student has at school has expired, we will promptly contact the student's parent/carer who will need to arrange for medication within the expiry date to be provided.
- If a student's Asthma Action Plan indicates that asthma medication must be administered through a spacer, parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that a spacer is provided to the school. The spacer should be clearly named.

Student Asthma Kit

- All students diagnosed with asthma are required to have a student asthma kit at school which contains:
 - * Asthma Action Plan;
 - * their own prescribed reliever medication labelled with the student's name; and
 - * their spacer (if they use one).

Student asthma kits will be stored in the student's classroom in an easily accessible location.
- Asthma medication may be kept by a student in either their school bag or on their person where it has been agreed by the school that this may occur. It is at the Principal's discretion to agree for the student to carry and manage his/her own asthma medication.

Asthma Emergency Response Plan

- If a student is:
 - * having an asthma attack;
 - * experiencing breathing for an unknown cause, even if they are not known to have asthma;

staff will endeavour to follow standard Asthma First Aid procedures outlined in Appendix 1.
- Staff may take emergency action by contacting Triple Zero (000) at any time and do not need to obtain parent/carer consent to do so.
- 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;
 - * if the person is having an asthma attack and a reliever is not available;
 - * if they are not sure if it is asthma; and
 - * if the person is known to have anaphylaxis.
- If first aid is administered for an asthma attack, or in an emergency situation, the parent/carer of the student will be contacted as soon as reasonably practical by a staff member.

Training for Staff

- School staff with a direct teaching role with students affected by asthma will complete asthma management training at least every three (3) years.
- School staff working with a high risk students with a history of severe asthma, or with direct student wellbeing responsibility, may be required to undertake additional training.
- Cardinia Primary School will conduct an annual briefing for staff 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; and
- * the location of Asthma Emergency Kits and asthma medication which has been provided by parents/carers for student use.

Asthma Emergency Kit

- Cardinia Primary School will provide and maintain at least two Asthma Emergency Kits. One kit will be kept on the school premises in the First Aid Room and one will be a mobile kit for camps and excursions.
- The Asthma Emergency Kit will contain:
 - * at least 1 blue or blue/grey reliever medication such as Airomir, Admol 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. Spacers will be stored in a dust proof container;
 - * clear written instructions on Asthma First Aid, including how to use the medication and spacer devices and 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 member of staff nominated each year to maintain the school's first aid supplies will also be responsible for maintaining the school's Asthma Emergency Kits. They will:
 - * 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 place them if they are expired or are low on doses;
 - * replace spacers in the Kits after each use (spacers are single-person use only);
 - * dispose of any previously used spaces.
- 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; and
 - * test the puffer to make sure no water remains in it, then return to the Asthma Emergency Kit.

Management of confidential medical information

- Confidential medical information provided to Cardinia Primary School to support a student diagnosed with asthma will be:
 - * recorded on the student's file; and
 - * 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 Cardinia Primary School's website so that parents and other members of the school community can easily access information about Cardinia Primary School's asthma management procedures.

Epidemic Thunderstorm Asthma

- Cardinia Primary School 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.

References

- *Health Care Needs Policy*
- School Policy Advisory Guide

Asthma

Asthma Attacks: Treatment

Asthma Emergency Kits

- Asthma Australia (www.asthmaaustralia.org.au)

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every year or as deemed necessary.

Ratified

As this is an operational policy it is not required to be ratified by School Council.



Asthma First Aid Procedures

APPENDIX 1

Step	Action
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit the person upright. • 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 Action 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give 4 separate puffs of blue or blue/grey reliever puffer. • Shake the puffer. • Use a spacer you have one. • Put 1 puff into the spacer. • Take 4 breaths from the spacer. <p>Remember – shake, 1 puff, 4 breaths</p>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait 4 minutes. • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is still not improvement call Triple Zero (000) and ask for an ambulance. • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.