

Parents/Guardians



When her children were young, Sandra Fusco-Walker's life was filled with sleepless nights, ruined vacations, emergency room visits, and her children's frequent school absences. Two of her three children – all under age 6 at the time – had asthma, "I was always worried about when the next bad thing would happen. But that was before we had a plan." The "plan" was an asthma action plan that guided her on how to track her children's symptoms, monitor their breathing, and give them medication. Fusco-Walker says she learned to control asthma after she followed her doctor's advice and after calling Nancy Sander, founder of the Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics, an organization that Fusco-Walker joined to advocate for the needs of families like hers.

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Action Checklist for Parents/Guardians

To keep your child's asthma or anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction) under control at school, you need to prepare yourself, your child and school staff. Here's what you **MUST** do before school starts:

1. Make a written Asthma Action Plan, Anaphylaxis Action Plan, and/or emergency care plan with your child's healthcare provider, and give a copy to your child's school. If the plan changes during the school year, be sure to give the school staff a new one, and review changes with them.
2. Make sure the school has two emergency numbers to reach you.
3. Schedule a conference with your child's school nurse, teacher, and other school staff (e.g., physical education teacher, cafeteria staff) to talk about your child's asthma and/or anaphylaxis.

By working with school staff, you can help make sure your child has a healthy school year. Here is a checklist to make sure you don't forget things that can be important:



- Visit your child's healthcare provider and complete a new Asthma Action Plan, Anaphylaxis Action Plan, and/or emergency care plan.** Give a copy to each of the child's teachers, school nurse, school secretary and after-school activity staff. At your medical visit, be sure to talk about your child's technique with peak flow meter, inhaler and spacer (for asthma) or with an EpiPen® or Twinject® Auto-Injector (pre-loaded epinephrine syringes for anaphylaxis); asthma and anaphylaxis triggers, especially those that the child might have at school, like exercise, animals, food allergies, or cold weather; medication; and peak flow meter use at school.
- Get all medication and health forms from the school** – don't forget the ones for sports or other activities. Fill them out completely and turn them in to the school.

- Make sure all medicines, including inhalers, nebulizers, and epinephrine auto-injectors (EpiPen® or Twinject®) are full and in working order.** Label all medications and devices with child's name and classroom.
 - Arrange a meeting with your child's school nurse, teacher and other school staff**, including child's after-school teachers and coaches, if needed. Include the child in the meeting if possible. At the meeting with the school staff, discuss:
 - Basics of asthma and/or anaphylaxis.
 - Your child's Asthma Action Plan, Anaphylaxis Action Plan, and/or emergency care plan.
 - How to make sure school staff know what to do and how to do it.
 - Warning signs for your child's asthma or anaphylaxis.
 - Your child's triggers, such as animals in the classroom, playing hard at gym class, food allergies (e.g., peanuts, shrimp), and bee stings.
 - Medications and access to medications. There is a law in the District of Columbia that allows students to carry their inhalers (for asthma) or auto-injectable epinephrine (for anaphylaxis) with them at all times if the required signed forms have been completed and submitted to the school.
 - Asthma tools, such as peak flow meters, spacers, and nebulizers.
 - Anaphylaxis medications, specifically EpiPen® or Twinject® Auto-Injectors.
 - Missing school and making up school work.
 - Visit the school, and check for your child's asthma triggers.** For example, check to see if the school is free of tobacco smoke at all times, including during school-sponsored events. If you find possible triggers in the school, talk to the school staff about getting the problems fixed before school starts. Federal and state laws are in place to help children with asthma.
 - Check with the school nurse, teacher, and other staff often during the school year** to make sure they are not having problems following the written action plan and your instructions, and that enough medication is on hand for your child.
- If it is hard for you to talk about asthma with your child's teachers and other school staff, ask the school nurse or your doctor or asthma counselor for help.

Tips for Working with Your Healthcare Provider

- Take a list of questions to ask your doctor or other healthcare provider.
- Ask the doctor to please tell you exactly what to do.
- Ask the doctor to repeat the information or write it down for you.
- State what you expect at each visit – tell your doctor or nurse what you want from the visit.
- Make a written action plan for asthma or anaphylaxis with your healthcare provider and follow it.
- Don't agree to do something that you do not plan to do.
- Ask if another option is available. Unless your doctor is told that a treatment plan is hard for you, he or she will not know to make changes.
- Be sure to keep your doctor's appointments, even if you are feeling fine. If you can't make an appointment, contact your doctor in advance to set up another time.

