

Playground Supervisors



At age 12, our son, Christopher, was running in the school playground and suddenly could not breathe. Other students saw his distress but laughed and taunted him, believing he was just acting silly. One girl, however, knew that our son was in serious trouble because she also had asthma. Her emergency inhaler was used to rescue our son, and we believe it saved his life.

— Dolores and Roger Blegen,
foster care parents

Action Checklist for Playground Supervisors

With preventive measures, students at risk of an asthma attack or anaphylaxis (a severe systemic allergic reaction) can and should be physically active. But when a student develops symptoms of asthma or anaphylaxis on the playground, you may be the only adult present. Be prepared to deal with an emergency if it occurs.

- Be aware of which students you are supervising have asthma and/or anaphylaxis.** Consult with the school nurse or health staff and request an emergency plan for the student based on the student's Asthma Action Plan or Anaphylaxis Action Plan.
 - Learn the signs of a developing asthma episode and allergic reactions.
 - Do not delay getting medical help for a child with any breathing difficulties.
 - **Do not leave a student having an asthma or anaphylaxis episode alone!**
- Keep student's rescue medications readily available** (typically an inhaler for asthma and an EpiPen® or Twinject® auto-injector for anaphylaxis). Even with precautions, breathing problems may occur. Learn how to assist students with rescue medication if needed. Providing medicine quickly can stop an attack or prevent it from getting worse.
- Check to see if exercise is an issue for the student.** If so, the student should use his/her reliever medication as directed 15 minutes prior to strenuous activity. A student who does not carry an inhaler but has authorization to be administered medication will need to receive the medication from the school nurse or other trained staff member.
- Know what else may trigger an asthma attack or anaphylaxis reaction.** For example, if the student is allergic to bee, wasp or other insect stings, make sure to remove all insect nests on or near school property, store garbage properly in covered containers, restrict eating areas to inside, and do not permit open soft drink cans outside. Keep students away from idling buses, trucks, and cars that can irritate their airways.
- Encourage students with asthma or anaphylaxis to engage in sports, but recognize and respect their limits.** Allow the student to adjust the type, pace, or intensity of activities during extreme weather, the pollen season, poor air quality, or when the student has asthma or allergy symptoms or recent illness.
- Provide longer warm-up and cool-down activities** for vigorous activity, especially in cold weather. Ask student to wear a mask or scarf to warm cold air before breathing it.
- Check ozone/air quality levels prior to outside activity.** High pollen or high ozone levels can cause exercise-induced asthma symptoms in most students with asthma.
- Never encourage a child or athlete with asthma to “tough it out”** and don't allow other children to tease or encourage another who is wheezing to continue the activity.
- Respect the student's right to confidentiality and privacy.** Discussion and questions about how the student feels (in detail) should be asked quietly and with discretion.