

# Asthma Triggers at School

## A Guide for Teachers, Nurses, and Parents

**Children with asthma miss more than 10 million school days a year in the U.S.**

Here are some ways to help your students stay in school and to reduce triggers in your classroom.

- ◆ **MEDICINES:** Know which medicines your students take. Many children with asthma should keep an inhaler and spacer at school. Ask parents to talk to their children's doctor and get necessary forms and prescriptions. Having a personalized "Asthma Action Plan" with emergency contacts lets everyone know what to do when a child starts developing asthma symptoms.
- ◆ **ACTIVITIES & EXERCISE:** Some asthmatic students may need to use their inhaler with spacer before going to P.E. or gym class to not become short of breath when running. If a student is showing asthma symptoms, such as coughing or wheezing, he/she should not participate in strenuous activity.
- ◆ **SAFE SLEEPING ZONE:** It is nearly impossible to remove all dust from carpet, even after continual cleanings. When children take naps, do not let them sleep directly on carpet. Instead, have them sleep on cots or covered mats. Carpet mats (for sitting) should also be limited.
- ◆ **DUST FREE ZONE:** Dust and chalk can easily trigger asthma. Each week use a clean, damp cloth to wipe all surfaces in your classroom and a damp mop to clean all exposed floors. Minimize use of chalk and clean up all chalk dust. Never assign students with asthma to sit near or clean the chalkboards or to do chores such as dusting, sweeping, or cleaning erasers.
- ◆ **COLDS:** Make sure your students wash their hands often with soap. Whenever possible, encourage parents to keep sick children home from school so not to expose the other students to colds or viral infections. Most students with asthma benefit from a "flu" shot every fall.
- ◆ **MOLD:** Mold is a major cause of allergy and asthma symptoms. In schools, potted plants, gym lockers, and gym showers are common areas of high mold growth. For obvious moldy areas, wash with diluted Clorox solution. Do NOT use humidifiers, which can increase mold growth.
- ◆ **FURRY PETS:** If your classroom opts for a class pet, choose fish or perhaps a turtle instead of furry pets.
- ◆ **GROUPS:** There may be many students at your school who are asthmatics, and organizing a "support group" of these children can help them better understand their own condition by identifying with each other. Parents may be interested in forming their own support group to learn more about caring for children with asthma.
- ◆ **ASTHMA EDUCATION & RESOURCES:** If you would like to learn more about asthma, here are some contact organizations. The American Lung Association can arrange asthma education for school personnel. For DC schools, call Lori Taylor at (202) 466-5864. For Maryland, call Valerie Nozea at (410) 560-2120 extension 206 or (800) 642-1184 x206. Also, the website [www.schoolasthma.com](http://www.schoolasthma.com) contains many valuable tips for schools as well as information about all aspects of asthma. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to call the IMPACT DC Asthma Clinic at (202)884-3970 or contact us at [www.impact-dc.org](http://www.impact-dc.org).