

Asthma Management Policy

Policy Context

It is important that all staff are aware of how to assess and manage an asthma emergency and the importance of daily asthma management.

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a condition of the airways. Individuals with asthma have sensitive airways in which can react to triggers that set off their asthma. When exposed to certain triggers their airways swell and get thick with mucus and the muscles around the airway squeeze tight, making it hard for them to breathe.

Triggers which can make asthma worse by causing the airways to narrow include:

- Cold or flu symptoms;
- Weather conditions;
- Exercise;
- House dust mite droppings;
- Pollens;
- Tobacco smoke and other smoke;
- Moulds;
- Pets and other animals;
- Chemicals and perfumes, deodorants and hairsprays
- Foods and food additives
- Emotional factors
- Pollution
- Certain medications

Symptoms of Asthma

Wheezing – high pitched whistling sound that occurs during breathing out, which is caused by turbulence of the air in the constricted airways. Although wheezing is a common symptom, some people never wheeze, particularly older adults. Wheezing may also be absent in a severe asthma attack where there is virtually no air movement.

Coughing – dry or moist – the typical asthma cough is a dry persistent cough often evident at night, particularly after a cold. Occasionally asthma causes a productive cough as the level of mucus builds up in the lungs. The night cough is an indication of worsening asthma and often causes sleep disturbance.

Shortness of breath – this is due to the increased effort associated with moving air in and out of the lungs

Tightness of the chest – as more air becomes trapped in the lungs, the person experiences increasing chest tightness.

These symptoms may vary from person to person.

Other symptoms may include:

- Rapid breathing – caused when the brain signals the body to breathe faster to get more oxygen to the tissues
- Difficulty talking – the person will have difficulty talking as air begins to be trapped behind mucus plugs in the lungs. This reduces the number of words able to be spoken as less air travels across the vocal cords and they are unable to vibrate. Speech patterns can be used to rate the severity of an asthma attack.
- Pale/sweaty
- Distress/anxiety
- Blue lips – indicates lack of oxygen and a sign of a severe asthma attack.

Policy

This policy is in place to manage the occurrence of asthma and to ensure staff asthma awareness. Staff with a duty of care for students will be trained to assess and manage an asthma emergency and will complete an Asthma Education session at least every three years. The First Aid Officer will ensure that equipment to manage an asthma emergency is in the Asthma Emergency Kit (AEK). The AEK should contain; in date blue/grey reliever puffer, spacer device, instructions for asthma first aid, record sheet.

Djerriwarrh has qualified, trained staff on site in the management of asthma and is committed to maintaining trained staff in this area.

For students under 18 diagnosed with asthma, an **Asthma Care Plan/Asthma Action Plan** completed by a medical/health practitioner must be provided to relevant staff on or immediately after enrolment and annually thereafter. Parents/guardians of students under 18, accessing Djerriwarrh programs and services are responsible for ensuring that the student has an adequate supply of the appropriate medication and spacer (if applicable) with them at all times.

On receipt of the Asthma Action Plan, the VCAL Manager will complete FO 243 Asthma Management Plan and make this information available to relevant staff who have care of the student's health and safety.

An AEK should be taken on all student excursions by the teacher in charge.

Associated Policies	PO 077 Anaphylaxis Management Policy
Associated Procedures	PR 067a VCAL Student Selection and Enrolment Procedure PR 079a Asthma Procedure
Other associated documents Internal	FO 243 Asthma Action Plan FO 252 Medication Authority Form RE 010 Medication Administration Register
Relevant Legislation	Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) Education Training and Reform Act 2006 Information Privacy Act 2000 Health Records Act 2001

Other associated documents External	Asthma Australia resources: https://www.asthmaaustralia.org.au/