

FACTSHEET

This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Helpful tips for managing your child's asthma

Seek Regular Medical Review

To ensure that your child's asthma is well controlled, it is important that their asthma management is reviewed regularly, even when well, at least every 6 months or more often if your child's asthma is severe or not well controlled. This will enable your child's **Overall Asthma Severity** to be assessed and monitored. The severity of your child's asthma can change from season to season. Recording your child's asthma symptoms in a **Symptom Diary** (see below) will assist your child's doctor in determining if any changes to your child's medications or **Asthma Action Plan** (see below) are needed.

Overall Asthma Severity

Overall Asthma Severity refers to your child's pattern of asthma symptoms rather than the severity of those symptoms during an asthma attack. In other words, how often do the asthma attacks occur? How long do they last? Do asthma symptoms occur in between these attacks? When do these symptoms occur i.e. daytime, night time, or early morning? Assessment of the **Overall Asthma Severity** will provide information on how well controlled your child's asthma is as well as determining their day to day treatment.

Symptom Diary

A **Symptom Diary** is a record of the type of symptoms that your child experiences, during the day and night, whether their sleep is disturbed due to symptoms, and how often they need to take their reliever medication due to

symptoms. Providing this information to your child's doctor will assist in prescribing appropriate medication as well as developing a written Asthma Action Plan specifically designed for your child. An example of a Symptom Diary can be found on **page 17**. Discuss with your child's doctor or asthma educator how often and when to record your child's asthma symptoms in a diary.

An Asthma Action Plan

This is a written plan designed especially for your child to help you manage their asthma. It is based on changes in your child's asthma symptoms and will give you information on what to do when your child is well, if their asthma worsens, and when their asthma improves. It provides information about the type of medication your child is prescribed, how much, and how often they need to take it. It also gives you a clear understanding of when to seek medical advice or help from a hospital Emergency Department.

It is important that you take your child's Asthma Action Plan with you every time your child visits their doctor so that the Asthma Action Plan can be reviewed and updated if necessary. Ask your child's doctor to provide you with an understanding of how the plan works and how best to use it. If you do not have an **Asthma Action Plan**, ask your child's doctor to write one for you at their next visit. An example of an Asthma Action Plan for a child can be found on **page 16**.

Short Term Reducing Medication Plan

Depending on which hospital your child attends, you may receive a **Short Term Reducing Medication Plan** at the time your child is discharged following an acute asthma attack. It outlines specific instructions to follow for the 3 to 5 days after discharge and provides a transition to your child's Asthma Action Plan. It includes details of how much and when to give reliever medication, oral steroids, and preventer medication, as well as when to make an appointment with your child's doctor.

Childcare, Schools, and Before and After School Care

To assist children's services and school staff, it is important they are aware that your child has asthma, or has previously been treated for asthma, and what first aid instructions you would like them to follow if your child has asthma symptoms in their care. It is recommended that a detailed written record of this information be provided to the children's service or school and updated regularly if your child's asthma management changes. A blank copy of a **Child/Student Asthma First Aid Record** is provided on **page 18** for your use. Providing the Children's Service or school access to your child's reliever medication, spacer device, or alternative reliever medication delivery device, clearly labeled with the child's name, enables staff to provide prompt treatment to your child if required. It is also recommended that your child's reliever medication be clearly labeled with the dose to be given as well as the expiry date of the medication. Always discuss any concerns that you may have with staff caring for your child.