



Asthma Triggers at School

Children with asthma miss more than 10 million school days a year in the U.S. Here are some ways to help students stay in school and reduce triggers in the classroom:

Medicines: Students with asthma should keep an inhaler and spacer at school. It is important that children see their health care professionals on a regular basis to get necessary prescriptions and to create a personalized **Asthma Action Plan**. Having an Asthma Action Plan and emergency contact information at school will let everyone know what to do when a child develops asthma symptoms.

Activities and Exercise: Some students with asthma may need to use their inhaler with spacer **before** going to Physical Education/gym class or playing sports to prevent becoming short of breath while exercising. If a student shows asthma symptoms, such as coughing or wheezing, he or she should not participate in strenuous activity.

Safe Sleeping Zone: It is nearly impossible to remove all dust from carpet, even with frequent cleaning. When children take naps, they should not sleep directly on carpet. It is better to sleep on cots or covered mats. Use of carpet mats (for sitting) also should be limited.

Dust Free Zone: Dust and chalk can trigger asthma symptoms. Teachers can use a clean, damp cloth or mop to clean all surfaces in the classroom each week. Students with asthma should not sit near or clean chalkboards, or do chores such as dusting, sweeping, or cleaning erasers.

Colds: Make sure children wash their hands often with soap or use hand sanitizer. Whenever possible, parents should keep sick children home from school so that other students will not catch their cold or viral infection. 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 for mold growth. Moldy areas can be washed with soap and water and dried completely. **Do not** use humidifiers, which can increase mold growth.

Pet: If students opt for a class pet, it is best to choose fish, turtles or other reptiles instead of a furry or feathered pets. Make sure that students wash their hands well after touching all pets.

Groups: There may be many students at your school who have asthma. Organizing a student "support group" can help these children better understand and manage their own condition by learning from each other. Parents may be interested in forming their own support group to learn more about caring for children with asthma.