

Breathing Easier: Making Child Care Asthma Friendly

Asthma is common and occurs in 7-10% of all pre-school children. While asthma can generally be well controlled in the child care setting, it is



important to realize that some triggers can cause an asthma attack or make asthma symptoms worsen. Since 70% of children with asthma spend much of the day outside their home, it is important that child care settings are asthma-friendly.

Important Steps to Reduce Triggers

- Maintain good indoor air quality; moderate humidity levels and change heating and cooling filters frequently
- Encourage the use of allergen impermeable nap mats / cribs and mattress covers
- Eliminate exposure to tobacco smoke, inside and out,
- Prevent and eliminate sources of mold, dust mites, pollen, animal dander and cockroach and mice debris;
- Don't use perfumes, harsh cleaning chemicals or pesticides,
- Remove animals with fur or feathers from the classroom,
- Minimize the amount of carpeted area, and
- Limit activity on poor air quality days for at-risk children.
- Avoid spreading infections such as cold and flu which trigger asthma

Store all food in airtight containers, clean up spills and crumbs, and properly dispose of garbage.

When Asthma Strikes...

Despite your efforts to create an asthma-friendly environment, asthma attacks can still happen. Being prepared for such an event is a must!

- Teach asthma awareness to all children, so others will not panic when an asthma attack occurs,

- Keep a written "asthma action plan" for each child with asthma easily accessible, follow the plan
- Administer medication without delay,
- Allow the child to be in a calm relaxed environment with constant supervision for as long as is necessary to recover, and
- If the child does not show improvement shortly after administering medication, re-administer meds as directed or call for more advanced medical assistance.
- If no response after re-administering meds call for more advanced assistance immediately,
- If you know what triggered the incident remove it or the child from the area As soon as possible.

Talking Points for Parents

- Don't let the disease define the child.
- Ensure that all children with asthma have emergency asthma action plans written by a doctor.
- Discuss common strategies to make other environments more asthma friendly.
- Discuss the importance for children to stay home on poor "peak flow" days.
 - Consider having a child tested for environmental triggers.

Social and Learning

Opportunities

Remember that children with asthma may or may not be able to participate in the same activities as other children. Rather than excluding a child,



think of how to modify the activity so that all may participate together.

Resources:

Download sample health and safety policies and forms from www.iidc.indiana.edu/ecc/res-health.htm

Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America: www.aafa.org or 800-727-8462.

Information consistent with *Caring for Out Children 2002*: <http://nrc.uchsc.edu>

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: www.nhlbi.nih.org

