

Management of Asthma — Coaches' Checklist for Athletes with Asthma

Step 1: Establish a process to identify children and youth with asthma.

- Know which athletes have asthma and/or use asthma medicine.
 - » Have parents/guardians complete a registration form that asks explicitly whether or not their child has asthma or uses asthma medicines.

Step 2: Allow children and youth with asthma easy access to asthma medication.

- Make sure athletes have the right inhaler with them at all times and that it is full and not expired. Help athletes get the most out of their medication — encourage athletes to use a spacer with their spray inhalers!
 - » Medications should not be shared. If athletes are having problems or are out of medication, they need to be seen by their health care provider.
- Know which athletes require assistance to use their inhaler.
- Be prepared to assist an athlete with asthma with his or her inhaler when needed.

Step 3: Establish a process for handling worsening asthma.

- Have a completed *Asthma Management Plan* form for each child/youth with asthma with you, and provide easy access to it for other staff and volunteers. Also, have older athletes keep a copy with them in their sports bag. This form outlines the steps for handling worsening asthma and when to seek urgent medical attention.
- Never encourage an athlete to “tough it out” and don’t allow others to tease the athlete.
- Know how to handle worsening asthma or an asthma flare-up. (Review the Ontario Lung Association’s poster, *Managing Asthma Attacks*, in Appendix 3.)
 - » Do not leave an athlete having an asthma attack alone.
 - » Never encourage an athlete who has any asthma symptoms (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath, wheezing, chest tightness) to continue the activity.

Step 4: Identify and reduce exposure to common asthma triggers.

- Know the athletes’ triggers and be aware of potential triggers that could affect the athletes’ performance (poor air quality, freshly mowed grass, extremes in weather).
- Assess whether or not indoor/outdoor environment triggers (poor air quality, freshly painted gym, varnished floors) exist prior to starting physical activity.
- Notify children and youth and their parents/guardians well in advance of off-site trips and identify activities involved. Ensure that reliever inhalers (usually blue) are easily accessible and that you know how to handle worsening asthma. Bring copies of your athletes’ *Asthma Management Plan* forms.

Step 5: Encourage children and youth with asthma to participate in physical and recreational activities and competitive sports.

- Start open communication with athletes and parents about asthma and their needs for support to manage asthma early. Make sure that you understand when it is time for the athlete to take a break so that flare-ups can be managed before they become emergencies.
- Incorporate a warm-up period and a cool-down period with all strenuous physical activity.
- Permit use of reliever inhaler (usually blue) 10 to 15 minutes prior to activity, if directed by the athlete’s health care provider.

□ Step 6: Provide opportunities for asthma education (e.g., for staff, coaches, parents/guardians and volunteers).

- Continue to learn about asthma to help athletes train to meet their highest potential.
 - » Use asthma resources created by leading community and professional organizations to learn more about asthma.

□ Step 7: Collaborate with others (e.g., health care providers, parents/guardians, coaches and program leaders) to create an asthma friendly environment (setting/program).

- Inform parents/guardians when their athlete show signs of poorly controlled and/or worsening asthma.
- Consult parents/guardians and, depending on the age, the athlete, if you have questions about an athlete's asthma.