



HEALTH SERVICES
ASTHMA PROTOCOL

DEFINITION:

Asthma is a condition that involves swelling and narrowing of bronchial tubes and excess secretions. This reaction may be triggered by an allergic reaction to foreign proteins (e.g. dust, pollens), various irritants (cigarette smoke, air pollution), viruses or bacteria, exertion, or physical stimuli (e.g. cold). Each individual has his/her unique trigger (or set of triggers) that provokes an attack.

MILD TO MODERATE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

1. Tight cough;
2. Difficulty breathing, especially on expiration;
3. Audible high pitched “wheezing” noises (sometimes only heard with a stethoscope);
4. Tightness of the chest or substernal chest pain;
5. Anxious appearance or restlessness;
6. Sometimes fever (if infection associated);
7. Increased respirations (greater than 25-30 at rest) with nasal flaring, increased use of stomach or chest muscles during breathing;
8. May have rapid pulse, elevated blood pressure.

SEVERE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

1. Difficulty speaking a full sentence in one breath or only able to whisper;
2. Bluish discoloration of lips, nails, around eyes or gums;
3. Severe coughing with choking;
4. Persistent vomiting;
5. Decreased level of consciousness;
6. If one listens with a stethoscope, wheezing may be absent and breath sounds diminished.

PROCEDURE:

1. **NEVER** LEAVE STUDENT ALONE.
2. Remain calm and encourage student to relax:
 - a. Provide a quiet location;
 - b. Have student assume most comfortable position (usually sitting up);
 - c. Encourage slow deep breaths;
 - d. Offer sips of water or warm liquids;
 - e. Have student focus on pleasant images, thoughts.
3. Administer medication as prescribed, or allow student to use own inhaler if prescribed. Monitor student’s use of medication in order to prevent an overdose. Side effects of asthma medication include: increased heart rate, shakiness, headache, vomiting.
4. Observe and record vital signs and response to medication
5. Observe student for at least 15 minutes after giving medication. If he/she improves within 15 minutes, may return to class.
6. If student does not respond within 15 minutes, call parent.
7. If severe symptoms develop:
 - a. Call 911 then notify parents;
 - b. Administer oxygen 6 liters per minute by nasal cannula or 15 liters per minute by non-rebreather mask (if available).
 - c. Administer additional medications if indicated on Individual Health Care Plan.
 - d. Be ready to administer CPR and attach AED (if available).