



He Kura Study
Asthma Support in Schools

He Kura: Asthma Support in Schools

This year our school is taking part in the He Kura Asthma Study with the University of Otago and Tu Kotahi Maori Asthma Trust. The study aims to provide guidelines and resources to help us to improve support for our students with asthma. Asthma is a big problem in New Zealand with one in five children having asthma symptoms. The ways in which schools support a child with asthma can have a significant impact on their asthma control and learning. Our staff have received asthma training from Asthma Wellington and our school now has asthma emergency kits. Other parts of the study include student asthma education, an environmental assessment and linkages with healthcare providers. The researchers are interested in your ideas about this project so please feel free to contact the research team on 0800 755 414 or wtr@otago.ac.nz.

Communication and Asthma Plans

We are trying to find out who has asthma or asthma symptoms in our school in order to provide better support for these children.

You should have received a form to update your child's medical information. As asthma can be difficult to recognise, this form includes some questions about your child's breathing as well as asthma. It is important that this form is completed for all students, not just those with asthma. Please complete the form and return it to the office or your child's teacher. If you need a new form, please get one from the office.

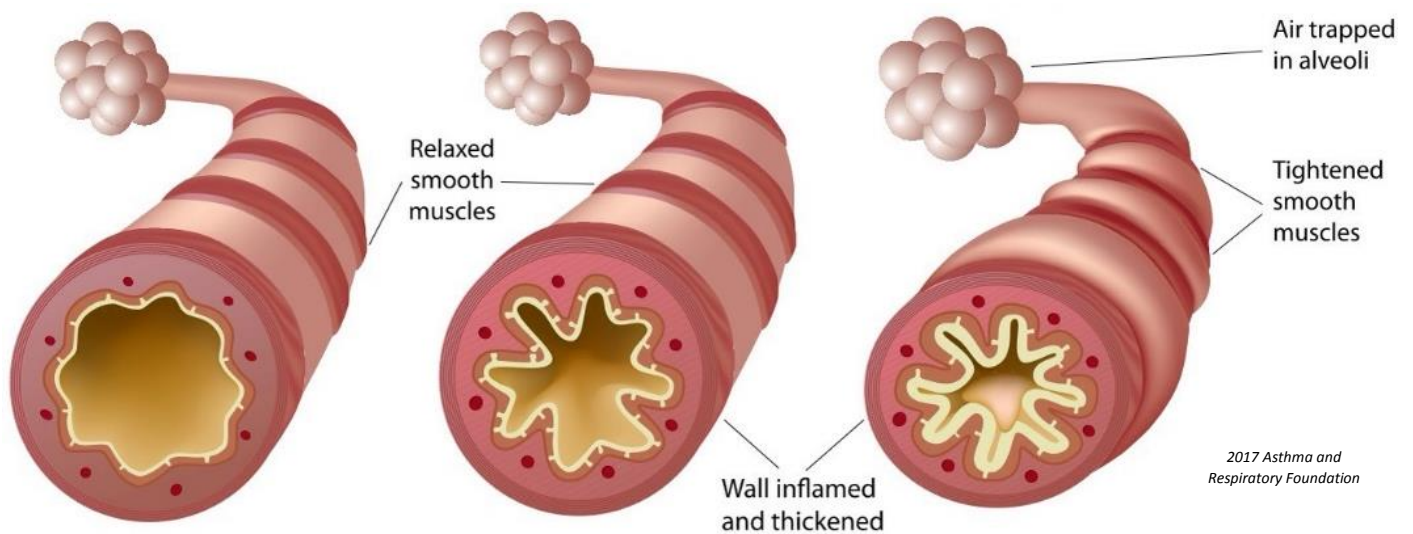
If your child has asthma, it is a good idea to talk to their teacher about their triggers, symptoms and medicine. If you do not already have one, ask your child's Doctor or health professional for an asthma plan for your child. An asthma plan shows what asthma medicine someone needs to take and when they should take it. Keep a copy of your child's asthma plan everywhere they visit regularly and give a copy to the school office. For more information about asthma plans visit www.pamp.co.nz.



Example of Pictorial Asthma Action Plan

What is Asthma?

When you breathe, air travels into your lungs through your breathing tubes (airways). People with asthma have sensitive breathing tubes that react to “triggers” that do not affect other people. A trigger is something that makes asthma worse or brings on an attack. A trigger can cause the breathing tubes to tighten, partially close up, swell inside and make more mucus. This makes it hard to breathe in and even harder to breathe out. Signs of asthma include coughing, breathlessness, wheezing and feeling tight in the chest.



2017 Asthma and Respiratory Foundation

Normal breathing tube

Breathing tube of someone with asthma

Breathing tube of someone with asthma during an attack

Asthma Triggers



Triggers are different for everyone; most people with asthma have several triggers. Knowing what triggers your asthma means you can try to avoid the trigger or take extra care before contact with your trigger. The most common triggers are colds and flu viruses, cigarette smoke, exercise, allergies, chemicals, dust, mould, changes in the temperature and weather, emotions, sprays and fumes. Do you know what triggers your child’s asthma? Talk to your asthma nurse or doctor to find out more about asthma triggers.

Inhalers

An inhaler is a plastic case that holds and delivers asthma medicine into the lungs. There are two main types of inhaler:



Metered Dose Inhalers- When the inhaler is pressed, a measured dose of asthma medicine is released through the mouthpiece. This type of inhaler should be used with a spacer.



A spacer is a clear plastic tube with a mouthpiece at one end and a hole for the inhaler at the other end. A spacer helps the full dose of asthma medicine to get into the lungs from the inhaler. Spacers are free of charge from your doctor.



Dry Powder Inhalers- These inhalers release asthma medicine as you breathe in.

Types of Asthma Medicine

Preventer

A preventer is your child's most important medicine, because it prevents swelling and narrowing inside the airways and reduces the likelihood of an asthma attack. Preventers work slowly, so your child will not notice any immediate change in how they feel but they will help to control the health of your child for the months ahead. Preventer medicine needs to be taken every day (or as prescribed) to be effective- even when your child is well.

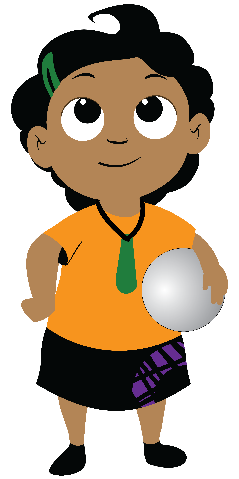
Reliever

Reliever medicine brings short-term relief from asthma. It relaxes the tight bands of muscle around your child's breathing tubes. This helps the air to flow in and out more freely. Reliever medicine can be taken to relieve wheezing, coughing or tightness in the chest. See your healthcare professional if your child is using their reliever more than 3-4 times a week, as this means their asthma is not under control.



Exercise and Asthma

Exercise is important for healthy lungs especially for tamariki with asthma. If your child is wheezing, coughing or has tightness in their chest during or after exercise, this might be triggering their asthma. Here are some tips to help you and your child to manage their asthma so that they can exercise and not miss out:



- **Asthma-friendly activities**

Try activities that involve a lot of starting and stopping like swimming, walking, tennis, yoga, martial arts or team sports.

- **Warm up**

Remember to stretch and warm up before exercising.

- **Use reliever inhaler before activity**

Encourage your child to take their reliever medicine (usually blue or grey coloured) before they exercise.

If your child cannot exercise without getting asthma, see their doctor or asthma nurse.

Asthma First Aid

If a person is finding it hard to breathe or having an asthma attack:

1) Sit the person up- they should not be lying down

- Be calm and tell them it will be okay

2) Give 6 puffs of the person's reliever medicine

- Use a spacer if there is one
- Put 1 puff into the spacer
- Take 6 breaths from the spacer
- Repeat until 6 puffs have been taken

3) Wait 6 minutes

-If the person is not better, give 6 more puffs

4) If the person is still finding it hard to breathe call 111 for an ambulance

- Keep giving 6 puffs every 6 minutes until the ambulance arrives.



Asthma Referrals

If you are worried about your child's asthma or breathing or would like more information about asthma, please contact Tu Kotahi Māori Asthma Trust or Asthma Wellington.

Tu Kotahi Māori Asthma Trust offer free services to families who live in the wider Hutt Valley area. The friendly Tu Kotahi staff are able to help with advice and education on all aspects of asthma. Services are provided to individuals and whānau through a range of settings, including home, marae and clinics. For more information, contact Cheryl Davies on (04) 939 4629 or email: info@kokiri-hauora.org.nz.

Asthma Wellington is a not-for-profit organisation providing services and support throughout the Wellington region. Their registered nurses are asthma specialists who provide free education and advice to individuals, families/whānau affected by asthma, COPD or other respiratory conditions. For advice or to book a consultation call (04) 237 4520 or email: wellington@asthma.org.nz

Useful Links

For more information about asthma visit:

- www.asthmafoundation.org.nz/resources
- www.asthma.org.nz/resources/

