



Childcare Asthma Toolkit



Asthma & Children



Children with controlled asthma can lead a healthy, active life. That's why it's important to learn as much as you can about their condition. Here are some of the things to think about and plan for a child with asthma.

Asthma Action Plan



- Create a plan with your doctor or nurse.
- Know what to do if your child has an asthma flare-up.
- Share the plan with your childcare provider, school nurse and family members who may take care of your child.

Asthma Medicines and Inhalers



- Make sure your child takes their medicine as prescribed by their doctor, even if they're feeling well.
- If your child has a quick relief inhaler, make sure they always have it with them.
- Always include a spacer with the inhaler to allow more medicine to enter your child's lungs.

Flu Shots and Vaccines



- Colds and flu can cause asthma flare-ups. Talk with your doctor or nurse about getting the flu shot and the pneumococcal vaccine.
- If your child gets a cold, talk with your doctor and check your asthma action plan before giving them medicine.

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention has a free program to help teach you about controlling asthma.



To learn more
call 1-888-644-1130 or visit
maine.gov/dhhs/asthma

Asthma Prevention and Control

Communicating with Parents



TALK with parents about asthma

As a childcare provider, you're an important part of the health of the children in your care. You are a trusted partner to parents to keep them informed about any health issues. When you care for a child with asthma, it's especially important to share information with parents and guardians.

Things to ASK parents about

Asthma Action Plans

An Asthma Action Plan is created by the child's doctor or nurse. The plan should be updated at least once a year and whenever changes are made to the child's asthma medicines. It includes:

- Anything known to cause a child's asthma to act up. These are called triggers and should be avoided whenever possible.
- Medicines for asthma which may include a daily controller to help prevent asthma symptoms and quick relief medicine that is fast acting to reduce symptoms when they're happening.
- What to do if the child starts to have asthma symptoms including what medicine to give, how much to give, and how to give it.
- When asthma symptoms become an emergency and what to do.
- Phone numbers for the child's parents or guardian as well as for the child's doctor or nurse.

Ask for signed permission to contact the child's doctor or nurse in case you are unable to reach the parent or guardian when the child is having asthma symptoms and you have concerns about what to do.

Quick Relief Medicines

All medicines need to be available and accessible whenever you have the child in your care.

- Ask parents to provide you with quick relief medicine to keep at your childcare location. If parents are not able to do this, make sure that the medicine is given to you every time they drop the child off.
- Quick relief medicines for children are usually given with spacers or nebulizers with masks to make it easier to get the medicine into the lungs. Ask parents to provide these and make sure you know how to use them.

Other Things to Ask About

- Any new asthma triggers identified by the parent or doctor.
- Patterns parents have noticed that might signal that asthma symptoms are beginning. (See the Asthma Warning Signs and Symptoms insert.)
- Asthma symptoms or flare-ups that have happened since the last time you cared for the child.
- Changes to medicines and asthma action plans.

Things to TELL parents about

Other Triggers

Inform parents if you notice a pattern of things or activities that seem to make the child's asthma worse. These may be asthma triggers the parent isn't aware of.

Use of Quick Relief Medicine

Make sure you report any time you administer quick relief medicine to a child. The documentation should include:

- When it was given
- How much was given
- How many doses were needed
- What symptoms the child was experiencing

Uncontrolled Asthma

If quick relief medicine is needed two or more times per week, the child's asthma may not be controlled.

- Recommend the parents talk with the child's doctor.
- Provide information about the free Maine Asthma Self-Management Education Program. See the brochure for the program provided in this packet or find a copy on the Asthma Prevention and Control webpage.



Asthma Prevention and Control

Warning Signs



Recognizing asthma signs and symptoms

There is no cure for asthma, but it can be controlled. As a childcare provider you are an important part of a child's team for managing their asthma. Asthma can affect every child differently, so it's important to know what to do when symptoms arise.

Triggers are things that make asthma worse

Not all children have the same triggers. When enrolling a child with asthma in your care, ask parents if they know what things will make their child's asthma worse. Common triggers include colds, tobacco smoke, and allergies to things like pets, dust and pollen. See the Asthma-Friendly Childcare Checklist for more information on triggers.

Early warning signs happen before the start of an asthma episode.

Early warning signs are milder symptoms that show a child's airways are becoming inflamed. When airways are inflamed, it becomes more likely that an asthma flare-up could happen. Young children may not be able to tell you how they're feeling, so it's important to be able to spot these signs to help avoid the potential for a dangerous situation.

Early warning signs

- Feeling tired or weak
- Itchy chin or throat

- Watery eyes
- Dark circles under eyes
- Stomachache or loss of appetite
- Minor coughing spells while laughing, playing, or napping

A child may have one or more of these signs, but sometimes there are no early warning signs before more serious asthma symptoms begin.

Responding to early warning signs

1. **Review the child's asthma action plan.** Decide if quick relief medicine is needed to open the airways. Be aware of what steps need to be taken if more serious symptoms appear.
2. **Move the child away from any triggers.** Avoid close contact with anything listed on the asthma action plan or identified by their parents.
3. **Watch for the start of more serious symptoms.**
4. **Tell parents what you noticed.** If no further symptoms develop, suggest they talk with the child's doctor or nurse if these symptoms continue.

Serious asthma symptoms (Flare-up or attack)

- Increase in coughing or wheezing
- Tightness in chest
- Shortness of breath
- Can't do usual activities
- Quick relief medicine did not work or last

Responding to serious symptoms

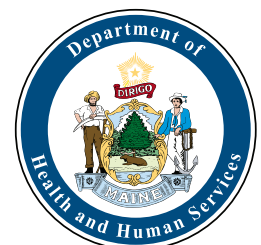
1. **Stay calm.** Have another member of the staff support any other children present.
2. **Consult the child's asthma action plan.** Follow instructions for using quick relief medicine to open the airways. Medicine should work within 5 minutes.
3. **Move the child away from any triggers.** If child is around something that bothers their asthma, try to leave or avoid the situation.
4. **Help the child remain calm.** Encourage them to breathe slowly and sit up straight to open airways.
5. **Watch the child to see how symptoms progress.** Be sure a responsible adult remains with the child to see if their condition is getting better, staying the same, or worsening.
6. **Use quick relief medicine if symptoms are not better within 15 minutes.** Continue to follow asthma action plan for repeat use of quick relief medicine, and call parents to pick up child. Encourage parents to speak with child's doctor or nurse.
7. **Continue to monitor child closely even if symptoms improve.**
8. **Look for dangerous asthma symptoms.** Review the asthma action plan, so you know what worsening symptoms look like and what to do if they happen.
9. **Report to parent as required by Maine Childcare Licensing Rules.**

Dangerous asthma symptoms (Emergency situation)

- Very short of breath
- Fast breathing
- Non-stop coughing
- Difficulty walking or talking
- Skin at neck or between ribs pulling in
- Pale, blue or gray lips and fingernails

Responding to dangerous symptoms

1. **Follow the steps for serious symptoms.**
2. **Use quick relief medicine immediately, if you haven't already.**
3. **Call 911.**
4. **Call parents.**
5. **Follow all Maine Childcare Licensing Rules after emergency is over.** Provide detailed health documentation and incident reporting as required.



Maine Asthma Self-Management Education Program



Learn to control asthma so it doesn't control you

What is it?

Maine Asthma Self-Management Education is a free program that helps you learn about asthma and the important things you can do to help manage it.

How can it help?

Asthma can't be cured, but it can be managed. Studies show education programs like these can help improve asthma control when added to medical care. This means you'll be able to enjoy an active, healthy life with fewer missed days at school or work.

Who is it for?

This service is for Maine adults or children (and their caregivers) who are currently being treated for asthma, but still experiencing any of the following:

- Needing to use a rescue inhaler more than twice in a week
- Waking up at night because of coughing or breathing issues
- Being unable to do activities you normally enjoy
- Missing school or work
- Having to go to urgent care or the emergency room

Who provides the education and where?

Public Health Nurses from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention will come to you to provide the asthma education program. This includes visits held at convenient locations—including your home, school or place of work.

Brought to you by the Maine Center for Disease Control

Enroll today

Call Maine Public Health Nursing at (888) 644-1130 to enroll yourself or refer someone.

What does it provide?

The Asthma Self-Management Education Program is held over two or more sessions and covers the following topics:

- Learn about asthma and what happens to your body during an asthma attack
- Understand how to use your asthma medicine
- Establish an asthma action plan that tells you what to do when your asthma symptoms are getting worse
- Discover how to reduce or avoid things that could make your asthma worse
- Access community resources to help reduce asthma triggers in the home

Do I need to pay for this?

The program is completely free and you do not need insurance to participate. The funding comes from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Cooperative Agreement: A Comprehensive Public Health Approach to Asthma Control Through Evidence-Based Interventions.



Asthma-Friendly Childcare Checklist

You play an important role to play in the lives of the children you care for. Children with asthma need support in childcare settings to keep their asthma under control, be fully active and improve their health and well-being.

Use this checklist to take actions to support children with asthma who are in your care.

Have an Asthma Action Plan for each child

An Asthma Action Plan is an important tool to help manage a child's asthma. It identifies:

- Triggers that make the child's asthma worse
- Medicines prescribed to treat the child's asthma
- What to do when symptoms start
- Emergency contact information in case of a severe asthma attack

Establish a tobacco and smoke-free policy at your facility

Exposure to smoke is dangerous – especially for infants and children. Smoking, including vaping, is against the law in center-based childcare facilities and in home-based childcare during the hours of operation.

Make sure the indoor air quality is good

You can improve indoor air quality by reducing the triggers in your childcare facility. Indoor air can sometimes have more triggers than outdoor air, such as dust, pet dander, and mold. It's important to:

- Set regular cleaning times
- Clean and dust heating and air conditioning vents regularly. Have them inspected and serviced at least once a year.
- Change filters for furnaces and air conditioners as recommended by their instruction manuals
- Try to not use fragrances, perfume, air fresheners, scented candles, and cleaning products with strong odors
- Use the bathroom fan or open the window to vent moisture that can cause mold to grow
- Use the fan above the kitchen stove if it vents to the outside or open a window while cooking
- Vacuum daily, with a HEPA filter vacuum if possible
- Keep windows closed when outdoor pollen counts are high

Eliminate or reduce triggers that can make asthma worse

Not all people with asthma have the same triggers. Do what you can do to decrease these triggers in your

childcare. Some common triggers found indoors are:

- Mold
- Dust mites (found in pillows, carpets, upholstery, and stuffed toys)
- Furry or feathered pets
- Odors (found in art and craft supplies, paint, perfumes, cleaning products, and pesticides)
- Pests (such as cockroaches, mice, and insects)

Clean and disinfect surfaces

Colds, flu, and other respiratory viruses are common triggers that worsen asthma, especially in younger children.

- Wipe down areas daily to kill germs and viruses
- Wash soft toys regularly
- Wipe down hard toy
- Require children stay home when sick

Support children with asthma to take part in all activities to the best of their abilities

It is important to encourage all children to participate in physical activity and play, including those with asthma, as exercise improves lung health. When exercise, pollen, cold air, humidity, or poor air quality are known triggers, follow the child's Asthma Action Plan to support safe activities indoors and outside.

Put in place a communication plan

Communicate with the child's parent or caregiver when you see asthma symptoms. Even if symptoms seem mild, it's important to work together and promote positive health and development.

Provide opportunities for asthma education

Providing asthma education for staff, parents and volunteers enables them to:

- Identify common asthma triggers
- Understand asthma signs and symptoms
- Increase their confidence with managing asthma attacks
- Practice using quick relief medicines will help them be ready before they may be needed

Resources for Staff and Parents

Maine's Asthma Self-Management Education Program

Ideal for Maine adults or children (and their caregivers) who are being treated for asthma.

Call Public Health Nursing at (888) 644-1130 to learn more about this free program.

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology

(800) 822-ASMA or (414) 272-6071

www.aaaai.org

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

(800) 7-ASTHMA or (202) 466-7643

www.aafa.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division of Adolescent and School Health

(800) CDC-INFO

www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/asthma

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Environmental Health Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects

(800) CDC-INFO

www.cdc.gov/asthma





maine.gov/dhhs/asthma