

# Coach/Instructor Implementation Tips

## Tool

**Resource:** Creating Asthma Friendly Environments

- **Establish a process to identify children and youth with asthma :**

Know which athletes/participants have asthma and/or use asthma medicine by requiring the completion of a registration form that asks explicitly whether or not the athlete/participant has asthma or uses inhalers to help with breathing.

- **Allow children and youth with asthma easy access to asthma medication :**

- Encourage athletes/participants to always carry or have with them their inhaler medication.
- Know which athletes/participants require assistance to use their inhaler. Typically, most children age seven years or older are capable of deciding when medication is required and have the skills to administer the medication properly.
- Be prepared to assist an athlete/participant with asthma with the correct method for administering the inhaler when needed. Meet with the parent/guardian at the start of the program to understand the athletes/participants needs for support/assistance.
- Make sure athletes/participants have a sufficient number of doses remaining in their inhaler (once the counter hits 20 doses remaining the inhaler should be replaced) and that it is not expired.
- Help athletes/participants get the most out of their medication - encourage athletes to use a spacer with their inhalers.
- Asthma inhalers should not be shared among athletes/participants. If athletes/participants are having problems breathing or are out of medication, they need to see their health care provider.

- **Establish a process for handling worsening asthma:**

- Require parents/guardians to complete and provide you with an [\*\*Asthma Management Plan\*\*](#) form for each athlete/participant with asthma and have older athletes/participants keep a copy with them in their sports bag. This form outlines how to recognize and respond to worsening asthma, when to seek urgent medical attention, and triggers that can bring on asthma symptoms.
- Provide copies of the *Asthma Management Plan* form to your staff and volunteers.
- Create a supportive and safe environment by never encouraging an athlete/participant to “tough it out” or allow others to tease the athlete/participant.
- Know how to handle worsening asthma or an asthma flare-up by reviewing the Lung Health Foundation's [\*\*What to do in the event of an Asthma Attack\*\*](#) poster.
- Never leave an athlete having an asthma attack alone.
- Never encourage a child or youth experiencing asthma symptoms (coughing, shortness of breath, wheezing, chest tightness) to start or continue physical activity. Encourage the use of the reliever inhaler to reverse symptoms. When the athlete/participant is no longer experiencing symptoms, the activity can be resumed.

- **Identify and reduce exposure to common asthma triggers:**

- Know the athletes’/participants’ triggers and be aware of potential triggers that could affect their 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 are easily accessible and that you know how to handle worsening asthma. Bring copies of your athletes’/participants’ Asthma Management Plan forms.

- **Encourage children and youth with asthma to participate in physical and recreational activities and competitive sports:**

- Openly communicate with athletes/participants and parents/guardians about asthma and the supports necessary for full participation. Make sure that you understand when it is time for the athlete/participant 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.
  - Assess whether or not indoor/outdoor environmental triggers exist to support athletes'/participants' involvement in the activity.
  - Permit use of reliever inhaler (usually blue) 10 to 15 minutes prior to activity, if directed by the athlete's health care provider.
- **Provide opportunities for asthma education (For example, for staff, coaches, parents/guardians and volunteers):**
    - Continue to learn about asthma to help athletes/participants train to meet their highest potential.
    - Use asthma resources created by leading community and professional organizations to learn more about asthma, such as Ophea's [Implementing Ryan's Law and PPM 161: Ensuring Asthma Friendly Schools 2023/23 e-Learning module](#).
- **Collaborate with others (For example, health care providers, parents/guardians, coaches and program leaders) to create an asthma friendly environment:**
    - Inform parents/guardians when their child shows signs of poorly controlled and/or worsening asthma.
    - Consult parents/guardians and, depending on the age, the athlete/participant, if you have questions about an athlete's/participants' asthma.