



Asthma and Environment Fact Sheet for Parents and Schools

Healthy Schools Network, Inc.

773 Madison Avenue, Albany, NY 12208

Tel:518-462-0632

Fax:518-462-0433

www.healthyschools.org

© 2003

- Asthma has reached epidemic proportions in the United States affecting about 15 million people of all ages and races, particularly children. (Managing Asthma in the School Environment, US Environmental Protection Agency, 2002, www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/asthma/asthma_epidemic.htm)
- Nearly one in 13 school-aged children has asthma, and the percentage of children with asthma is rising more rapidly in preschool-aged children than in any other age group. (EPA)
- Asthma accounts for 14 million lost days of school missed annually and is the leading cause of school absenteeism due to a chronic illness. (Asthma's Impact on Children and Adolescents, Centers for Disease Control, 2002, <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/asthma/children.htm>)
- Asthma is the third-ranking cause of hospitalization among those younger than 15 years of age. (CDC)
- The number of children dying from asthma increased almost threefold from 93 in 1979 to 266 in 1996. (CDC)
- The estimated cost of treating asthma in those younger than 18 years of age is \$3.2 billion per year. (CDC)
- Air pollution indoors or outside will make asthma worse, or can cause new cases of asthma. (Clearing the Air: Asthma and Indoor Air Exposures, The National Academy of Science, National Academy Press, 2000)
- **Since Americans spend up to 90% of their time indoors, exposure to indoor allergens and irritants may play a significant role in triggering asthma episodes. Asthma "triggers" include: dusts, strong odors, fumes from cleaning products, construction dusts and fumes, diesel exhaust, smoke (especially from tobacco), toxic pesticides, molds and mildews, insect and pet dander, allergens and other impurities in the air. (CDC, EPA, NAS)**
- Schools are the workplaces of children, they are required to be their by law, yet the GAO estimates that roughly a third of schools have poor indoor air quality and that 14 million children are in buildings that threaten their health. (General Accounting Office, School Facilities: Conditions of America's Schools, 1995)
- Schools with healthier indoor air have: fewer asthma attacks, better attendance; fewer bronchitis and upper respiratory illnesses; fewer visits to the school nurse with complaints of stomachaches, headache, sinus infection.
- Federal laws require schools to provide a "free appropriate public education" and to provide accommodations to students, including those with health problems, like serious asthma, that affect learning.

Call or Visit www.healthyschools.org for Help!



Asthma Fact Sheet and Common Asthma Drug Interactions

Healthy Schools Network, Inc.

773 Madison Avenue, Albany, NY 12208

Tel:518-462-0632

Fax:518-462-0433

www.healthyschools.org

© 2003

Your child's asthma can be controlled. Your child's physician may also prescribe medication to control your child's asthma. Follow your doctor's orders for taking any medicine; make sure your school has a copy of the medication plan and allows your child to carry his/her own inhaler at school.

Parents of children with asthma should be aware that asthma can be seriously aggravated by the environment, and that controlling asthma "triggers" can reduce your child's discomfort and health problems caused by asthma (see reverse side of this fact sheet). As a parent, you should also be aware that any medication has side effects, some of them potentially serious.

You should ask your physician about the side effects of prescribed medication. **Always try to alleviate your child's asthma through eliminating the environmental asthma triggers in your child's home and school.**

Some of these medications and some of their side effects are as follows:

RELIEVER MEDICATION	COMMON ADVERSE EFFECT
Albuterol HFA, bitolterol, pirbuterol, terbutaline, albuterol rotahaler, albuterol nublized solution, bitolterol nebulized solution	Tremors, tachycardia, nervousness, nausea, vomiting
Levalbuterol	Tremors, nervousness, headache
Methylprednisolone, prednisone, prednisolone	HPA axis suppression, hypertension, diabetes, osteoporosis, cataracts, obesity, moon face
Ipratropium MDI, Ipratropium nebulized solution	Headache, dry mouth, palpitations, nausea
CONTROLLER MEDICATION	COMMON ADVERSE EFFECT
Cromolyn, nedocromil	Dry mouth, hoarseness, bad taste, cough, wheeze
Salmeterol, albuterol sustained release	Tremors, tachycardia, nervousness, vomiting
Formoterol	Anxiety, tremors, restlessness, tachycardia
Theophylline	Nausea, vomiting, nervousness, tremors, headache
Zafirlukast, montelukast	Headache, abdominal pain
Zileuton	Monitor liver enzymes