

Advice for Mentors

General Effects: Asthma is a lung condition that causes difficulty in breathing. An asthma attack, often referred to as a flare up, is when a person's airways narrow, making it difficult for any air to move through them. What triggers an episode varies from person to person. Some common causes include exercise, allergies, viral infections, and smoke.

Symptoms can include:

- coughing spell
- decreased energy
- wheezing
- shortness of breath
- rapid breathing
- chest tightness or hurting
- see-saw motions in the chest
- tightened neck and chest muscles
- feeling of weakness
- tiredness
- dark circles under eyes
- headache
- loss of appetite
- loss of breath

Exercise-Induced Asthma: Children with exercise-induced asthma develop symptoms after engaging in physical activity. This type of asthma is commonly treated through medication.

- It is important to ensure that your Little has taken their medication before engaging in any physical activities.
- Check with your Little's guardian to see if you will need to carry medication during outings.

Allergy-Induced Asthma: Children with allergy-induced asthma develop symptoms after being exposed to allergens.

- It is important to be aware of your Little's allergies in order to avoid exposure while on outings.
- Speak to the guardian about the extent of these allergies and what to avoid.
- Check in with your Little's guardian to see if you will need to carry medication during outings.

Create an Asthma Action Plan:

- Upon meeting your Little and their guardian(s), ask for/to create an asthma action plan. An asthma action plan is a set of personalized instructions that outlines the procedure a Little (family and Big) should take to manage the child's asthma.
 - The plan should include the Little's triggers, symptoms, treatments, and a list of emergency contact numbers.
- As a Big, being aware of your Little's action plan will help you to avoid triggers, be aware of asthma symptoms, and if necessary, provide treatment or intervention in the case of a flare up.

Medication: Some Littles will need to take medication during outings. Bigs should only administer medication with directions and permission from a guardian. If your Little will regularly need medication on outings, it can be helpful to have written instructions for frequency and dosage. To keep on schedule, try setting a reminder on your cell phone.

Take Action During an Asthma Attack: An asthma attack is characterized by the following severe symptoms: coughing, wheezing, troubles walking/talking, and/or blue lips. If such symptoms are present, immediately give the child their reliever medicine if you carry it and call the guardian. Wait 5-15 minutes. If symptoms do not disappear, continue to follow the child's action plan. If a Big has serious concerns or a Little is not improving, call the child's doctor or 9-1-1.