



Melbourne High School – Asthma Policy

PURPOSE - To ensure that Melbourne High School appropriately supports students diagnosed with asthma.

OBJECTIVE - To explain to Melbourne High School parents/carers, staff and students the processes and procedures in place to support students diagnosed with asthma.

SCOPE -This policy applies to:

- all staff, including casual relief staff, contractors and volunteers
- all students who have been diagnosed with asthma or who may require emergency treatment for asthma and their parents/carers.

POLICY

Asthma

Asthma is a long-term lung condition. People with asthma have sensitive airways in their lungs which react to triggers, causing a 'flare-up'. In a flare-up, the muscles around the airway squeeze tight, the airways swell and become narrow and there is more mucus. This makes it hard to breathe. An asthma flare-up can come on slowly (over hours, days or even weeks) or very quickly (over minutes). A sudden or severe asthma flare-up is sometimes called an asthma attack.

Three main factors cause the airways to become narrow:

- *Inflammation – the inside lining of the airway becomes red and swollen*
- *Extra mucous – more than usual amounts of mucus may be produced*
- *Muscle spasm – the muscle around the airways to constrict.*

Normal airways vs Astmatic airways

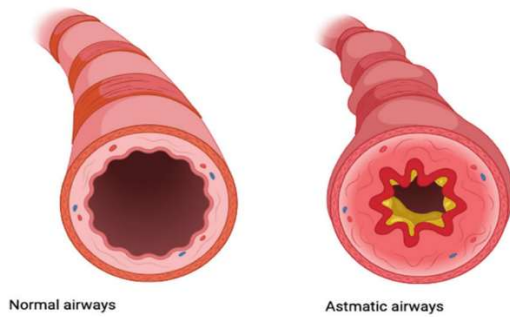


figure 1 – normal airway v asthmatic airway

Symptoms

Symptoms of asthma can vary over time and often vary from person to person. The most common asthma symptoms are:

- breathlessness
- wheezing (a whistling noise from the chest)
- tight feeling in the chest
- persistent cough

Symptoms often occur at night, early in the morning or during/just after physical activity. If asthma is well controlled, a person should only have occasional asthma symptoms.

Triggers

A trigger is something that sets off or starts asthma symptoms. Everyone with asthma has different triggers. For most people with asthma, triggers are only a problem when asthma is not well controlled with medication. Common asthma triggers include:

- exercise
- colds/flu
- smoke (cigarette smoke, wood smoke from open fires, burn-offs or bushfires)
- weather changes such as thunderstorms and cold, dry air
- house dust mites and moulds
- pollens
- animals such as cats and dogs
- chemicals such as household cleaning products
- deodorants (including perfumes, after-shaves, hair spray and aerosol deodorant sprays)
- food chemicals/additives
- certain medications (including aspirin and anti-inflammatories)
- laughter or emotions, such as stress

Recognising Asthma Severity

Mild- patients can talk in sentence's, will have a cough, a quiet wheeze, minor difficulty breathing and have tightness in the chest.

Moderate -patient will speak in shortened sentences, have a persistent cough, loud wheeze, difficulty breathing and tightness in the chest.

Severe – the patient will speak few words per breath, have a persistent cough, wheeze may be absent, gasping for breath/distress, pale and sweaty and have blue lips.

Individual asthma management

If a student diagnosed with asthma enrolls at Melbourne High School, the following occurs:

1. Parents/carers must provide the school with an Asthma Action Plan which has been completed by the student's medical practitioner. The plan must outline:
 - the prescribed medication taken by the student and when it is to be administered, for example as a pre-medication to exercise or on a regular basis
 - emergency contact details
 - the contact details of the student's medical practitioner
 - the student's known triggers
 - the emergency procedures to be taken in the event of an asthma flare-up or attack.
 - A photo should be attached to the document for identification purposes (if a photo is not attainable then the student's Compass phot will be used
2. Student asthma plans will be stored in the Health Centre and are also uploaded to Compass so that all staff have access to this information.
3. Student Asthma Health Support Plans will be developed by the school nurse, which accompanies the students Asthma Action Plan. The Health Support Plan will include details on –
 - How the school will provide support for the student
 - Identify specific strategies to manage risks

** In 2026, The Department of Education changed their advice regarding the need for Asthma Health Support Plans for all students with an asthma diagnosis. It is now only required when a student's symptoms are uncontrolled/unmanaged. However, they will remain in place at MHS due to the guidance provided within the document so as staff are able to confidently provide support for a student when they experience asthma symptoms at school, sports events, camps, excursions and overseas/interstate trip. The Asthma Health Support Plan (template located at the back of this document) is completed by the Nurse in consultation with the student and family. The Asthma Health Support Plan details how the

school will provide support for the student, identify specific strategies and allocate staff to assist the student. The School Nurse is the primary /first responder to treat the student/staff member

4. If a student's asthma condition or treatment requirements change, parents/carers must notify the school nurse and provide a new Asthma Action Plan.
5. Once an Asthma Health Support Plan is completed by the nurse, it will be sent home for parents and the student to review the document and make any changes required.

Asthma Health Support Plans will be developed in accordance with Melbourne High School's Health Care Needs Policy.

6. If a student diagnosed with asthma is going to attend a school camp or excursion, parents/carers are required to provide any updated medical information and ensure the student attends the event with all relevant medication and equipment.
 - It is recommended that students have their Asthma Action Plan reviewed yearly by their doctor. Please refer to each student's Individual Asthma Action Plan for guidance regarding reviews.
 - if available, provide updated medical or health advice
 - review and provide written confirmation that the Asthma Action Plan is still current.
 - Asthma Health Support Plans are easily accessible on Compass - on the student Personal Page of the portal (all staff have access to this).

Student Management of their Asthma

All students diagnosed with asthma are required to always carry their reliever (Ventolin) medication with them, particularly when competing in sport. Ventolin is stored in the Health Centre and in all first aid kits, however these should not be relied on. It is the parent/carers responsibility to provide the asthma medication and ensure it remains in date.

First Aid Kits

Students diagnosed with asthma should always carry with them their reliever medication and spacer

All first aid kits contain Ventolin and disposable spacers as well as an Asthma First Aid card (see image below). The nurse monitors the expiry dates of the reliever medication and replaces them immediately. There are first aid kits containing asthma relievers and spacers at Reception, General Office, Sports Centre, Library, Wellbeing, Careers and the Health Centre.

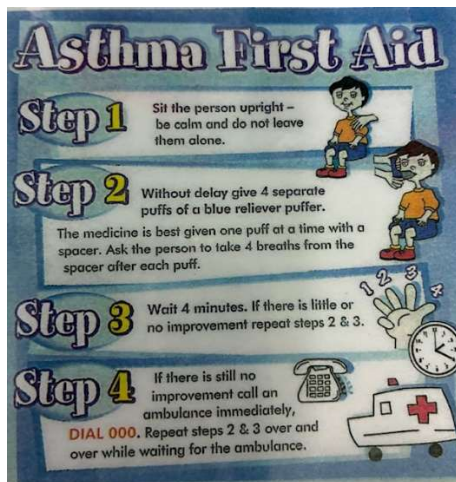


Figure 2: Asthma First Aid Card

The School Nurse monitors and maintains the Asthma Emergency Kits (and all other first aid kits) once a term in accordance with the OHS Calendar.

- ensure all contents are maintained and replaced where necessary
- regularly check the expiry date on the canisters of the blue or blue/grey reliever puffers and place them if they have expired or a low on doses
- replace spacers in the kits after each use (spacers are single person use only)
- dispose of any previously used spacers.

The blue or blue/grey reliever medication in the Asthma Emergency Kits may be used by more than one student as long as they are used with a spacer. If the devices come into contact with someone’s mouth, they will not be used again and will be replaced.

Please note: some students are prescribed with a different type of reliever, example Bricanyl, who’s actions are similar to Ventolin, however this medication is not stored in the Health Centre, therefore the student is required to carry their reliever mediation with them always

After each use of a blue or blue/grey reliever (with a spacer):

- remove the metal canister from the puffer (do not wash the canister)
- wash the plastic casing
- rinse the mouthpiece through the top and bottom under running water for at least 30 seconds
- wash the mouthpiece cover
- air dry then reassemble
- test the puffer to make sure no water remains in it, then return to the asthma emergency kit.

Emergency Management of Asthma

Emergency Asthma Kits are available in various locations around the school, including the Emergency Management Wall in the Health Centre



Figure 3: Emergency Management Wall in the Health Centre

Asthma emergency response plan

If a student is:

- having an asthma attack
- difficulty breathing for an unknown cause, even if they are not known to have asthma

School staff will endeavour to follow the Asthma First Aid procedures outlined in the table below. School staff may contact Triple Zero “000” at any time. The table below outlines the standard steps of Asthma Management, however some students have different instructions on their Asthma Action Plan from their doctor, and these should be followed. Student Asthma Plans are easily accessible on Compass on the Personal Page of their portal (all staff have access to this).

Step	Action
1.	<p>Sit the person upright</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be calm and reassuring • Do not leave them alone • Seek assistance from another staff member or reliable student to locate the student’s reliever, the Asthma Emergency Kit and the student’s Asthma Action Plan (if available). • If the student’s action plan is not immediately available, use the Asthma First Aid as described in Steps 2 to 5.
2.	<p>Give 4 separate puffs of blue or blue/grey reliever puffer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shake the puffer • Use a spacer if you have one

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put 1 puff into the spacer Take 4 breaths from the spacer <p>Remember – Shake, 1 puff, 4 breaths</p>
3.	<p>Wait 4 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If there is no improvement, give 4 more separate puffs of blue/grey reliever as above <p>(or give 1 more dose of Bricanyl or Symbicort inhaler)</p>
4.	<p>If there is still no improvement call Triple Zero “000” and ask for an ambulance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell the operator the student is having an asthma attack Keep giving 4 separate puffs every 4 minutes until emergency assistance arrives <p>(or 1 dose of Bricanyl or Symbicort every 4 minutes – up to 3 doses of Symbicort)</p>
5.	<p>If asthma is relieved after administering Asthma First Aid, stop the treatment and observe the student. Notify the student’s emergency contact person and record the incident in eduSafe Plus.</p>

Staff will call Triple Zero “000” immediately if:

- the student is not breathing
- the student is having a severe or life-threatening attack (reliever medication not working at all; cannot speak a full sentence; extreme difficulty breathing; feeling asthma is out of control; lips turning blue)
- the student is having an asthma attack and a reliever is not available
- the student is known to have anaphylaxis – staff will follow their Anaphylaxis Action Plan then give asthma first aid
- at any time the student’s condition suddenly worsens or is not improving
- staff are otherwise concerned about the student’s health and safety.

Training for staff

Staff are encouraged to be trained in Asthma Management. Asthma is included in Level 2 First Aid Courses and also as standalone e-training provided by Asthma Australia.

Melbourne High School arranges the following asthma management training for staff:

Staff	Completed by	Course	Provider	Cost	Valid for
Group 1 General Staff	School staff with a direct teaching role with students affected by asthma or other school staff directed by the principal after conducting a risk assessment.	Asthma First Aid for Schools (non-accredited) One hour online training.	Asthma Australia	Free to all schools	3 years
Group 2 Targeted Staff	Staff working with high risk children with a history of severe asthma, or with direct student wellbeing responsibility (such as nurses, first aid officers, camp organisers) or in high-risk teaching areas (such as PE/sport, home economics or cooking teachers)	<i>Course in the Management of Asthma Risks and Emergencies in the Workplace</i> 22556VIC (accredited)	Any RTO that has this course in their scope of practice	Paid by Example School	3 years

The Melbourne High School Nurse also conducts biannual briefings incorporating Anaphylaxis and Asthma for staff on:

- the procedures outlined in this policy
- the causes, symptoms and treatment of asthma identities of the students diagnosed with asthma
- how to use a puffer and spacer
- the location of the Asthma Emergency Kits, and asthma medication which has been provided by parents/carers for student use.

Melbourne High School also provides this policy to casual relief staff and volunteers who will be working with students and may also provide a briefing if the principal decides it is necessary depending on the nature of the work being performed.

This policy can also be found on the school website.

Epidemic Thunderstorm Asthma -The School nurse at Melbourne High School is prepared to act on the warnings and advice from the Department of Education and the BOM when the risk of epidemic thunderstorm asthma is forecast as high. On Thunderstorm Asthma warnings, parents to ensure the students has all their medication with them and to follow their Asthma Action Plan

Management of confidential medical information

Confidential medical information to support a student diagnosed with asthma is:

- recorded on the student's file
- shared with all relevant staff and published on Compass, so that they are able to properly support students diagnosed with asthma and respond appropriately when the student requires assistance..

Communication

This policy is communicated with our school community in the following ways:

- School website (publicly accessible)
- Staff induction materials
- Training for school staff
- Usual school community communication platform- Compass
- Newsletter
- Staff manual/ handbook
- Staff briefing/meeting
- Enrolment or transition packs
- Parent information nights/sessions

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- Asthma Australia: [Resources for schools](#)
- Asthma Australia: [Asthma emergency kits](#)
- Policy and Advisory Library:
 - [Asthma](#)
 - [Treating an asthma attack](#)
- All Melbourne High School Policies can be located on the school website
- **Help for non-English speakers** -If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the school on 98260711 and ask to speak to the Nurse – Lisa Delahunty

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	May 2026
Approved by	Dr Tony Mordini
Next scheduled review date	May 2027 (this policy is to be reviewed annually)
Policy Review Conducted by	Lisa Delahunty RN Div.1 School Nurse