

Melissa, our site nurse received some questions about asthma protocol after an EMS call yesterday, so we want to make sure everyone is clear on how to intervene for an acute asthma attack.

If the student has an inhaler on her person:

- Reassure the student and speak in a calm voice
- Encourage the student to use the inhaler; assist the student if necessary
- Repeat the inhaler as needed every 3 to 5 minutes (it's okay to do it sooner)
- Maintain the student in a seated position, leaning forward, elbows resting on her knees (this makes it easier for the lungs to fill, since there is less pressure from the rib cage)
- Help the student minimize her oxygen use (this means do not ask unnecessary questions or make her move anymore than necessary)
- If the student does not show improvement, or after 3 doses with continuing respiratory distress, call EMS and notify her parent
- If the student feels perfectly fine after using the inhaler, then notify the parent but nothing else needs to be done. The student may return to class. Encourage the student and parent to keep an extra inhaler in the nurse's office, just in case (she should still always keep an inhaler on her person).

If the student does not have an inhaler on her person:

- Call office to request an ambulance and notify the parent
- Reassure the student and speak in a calm voice
- Maintain the student in a seated position, leaning forward, elbows resting on her knees (this makes it easier for the lungs to fill, since there is less pressure from the rib cage)
- Help the student minimize her oxygen use (this means do not ask unnecessary questions or make her move anymore than necessary)
- The only thing that will fix the problem is to get an inhaler or a breathing treatment from EMS
- If there is the possibility of an inhaler in a backpack, send someone to obtain it, but do not delay EMS. What if the backpack cannot be located? What if it is locked in a locker? What if the student forgot to put it in the backpack that day? What if it is expired? Unless you see the inhaler on her person, treat it as if you do not have an inhaler. (This is the situation we had yesterday). If the inhaler arrives before EMS gets there, great! The student is saved. But do not risk her life by not calling EMS. However, if you know someone is running to you with the student's inhaler, it would be appropriate to allow a few moments for its arrival and proceed as listed above.
- If EMS stabilizes the patient, then call home for an inhaler, and the student may return to class if she desires to do so. Encourage the student and parent to keep an extra inhaler in the nurse's office (in addition to the one on her person).

Signs of an attack:

- Gasping between words
- Pale/blue lips
- Wheezing
- Drowsiness or losing consciousness
- A student who is unable to communicate but is sitting in the position described above

--Confusion

Of course, you can always call our site nurse to respond, and she will know if I have an inhaler for the student in my office. However, just in case she is not available we want to make sure the protocol is clear. Please forward this to whomever you deem appropriate, and let Melissa know if you have any questions.

Administration