

# Asthma first aid for your child

Australian Family Physician



**Most children with asthma are well controlled on asthma preventer medications. However, colds, flu and other triggers such as dust, pollens, animals, tobacco smoke and exercise can sometimes set off an asthma attack with little warning. Here's what to do if your child has an asthma attack.**

## The classic signs of asthma

- wheeze
- cough, and/or
- difficulty breathing.

## What to do

1. Place spacer (or inhaler) mouthpiece in your child's mouth and fire 1 puff of a 'blue' reliever inhaler as he/she inhales slowly and steadily
2. Ask your child to breathe in and out normally for about 4 breaths (For younger children and infants use a spacer and face mask. Hold the mask in place until the child has taken 4 breaths).

**Sometimes your child may have an asthma attack that does not respond to their normal dose of reliever. Follow the steps below if your child shows no improvement.**

## Danger signs

- extreme difficulty breathing
- little or no improvement from reliever puffer
- lips turn blue
- symptoms getting worse quickly
- severe shortness of breath or difficulty in speaking
- a feeling of being frightened or panicked.

**Dial 000 for an ambulance (or 112 from a mobile phone) and follow the 'asthma first aid plan' while waiting for the ambulance to arrive.**

## Asthma first aid plan – 4 x 4 x 4

1. Sit your child comfortably upright
  - Be calm and reassuring
  - Shake 'blue' reliever inhaler and insert mouthpiece into spacer (you can use the reliever inhaler alone if you don't have a spacer)
2. Place spacer (or 'blue' reliever inhaler) mouthpiece in your child's mouth and fire 1 puff as he/she inhales slowly and steadily
3. Ask your child to breathe in and out normally for about 4 breaths
  - REPEAT steps 2, 3 and 4 **FOUR TIMES** (total 4 puffs)
  - Wait **4** minutes
  - Keep giving 4 puffs every 4 minutes until the ambulance arrives.

**Don't worry – asthma reliever inhalers at repeated doses for asthma attacks are safe – you will not overdose your child. Always see your GP immediately after a serious asthma attack.**

## Resources

- Ask your GP for a written 'Asthma action plan' for your child
- For more information on asthma and asthma management, contact your local Asthma Foundation: freecall 1800 645 130
- Visit the National Asthma Council website at: [www.nationalasthma.org.au](http://www.nationalasthma.org.au)

Source: National Asthma Council

