



# ASTHMA



Office of School  
Health  
New York City  
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## Asthma Information

### Asthma Myths

There are many myths about asthma that make it difficult to fully control a child's asthma symptoms. Your school health team, school doctor, and nurse can help by providing you with the asthma facts to clear up some of these myths.

1. Myth: "Asthma is not a serious disease."

Fact: Asthma is a very serious disease. Poorly controlled asthma can be fatal. Children should have regularly scheduled appointments with their health care providers to continue monitoring their asthma, learn the signs and symptoms of an asthma attack and obtain necessary medications. The school health team can work with you, your child, and your health care provider to ensure your child is getting the asthma care he or she needs.

2. Myth: "The steroids prescribed to treat my child's asthma are going to make her develop huge muscles like those athletes."

Fact: The illegal steroids abused by some athletes are different from the steroids used to treat asthma. Your child will not develop big muscles when they take the steroids prescribed by their health provider for their asthma. The school health team can review the medication with you and your child if you have any questions. Inhaled steroids control asthma best when used daily.

3. Myth: "My child can't participate in gym or use the stairs because he has asthma."



Fact: Physical activity should be an essential part of every child's life—even children with asthma. In fact, improved physical fitness can reduce the symptoms of asthma. Your child's healthcare provider can prescribe the proper medication and develop an asthma management plan to minimize your child's asthma symptoms during physical activity. If your child needs to take medications in school to control asthma during physical education, inform your school health team and have your child's healthcare provider complete a [medication administration form](#).

4. Myth: "My child can get addicted to her inhaler."

Fact: Asthma medications are not addictive. Poorly controlled asthma causes children to overuse their inhalers (quick relief medication) which some people confuse with "addiction." Getting asthma under control through the use of daily controller medication is the best way to reduce the need to use quick relief medications so often. If you have questions about your child's asthma medications, speak to your child's healthcare provider or a member of the school health team.

### Open Airways in Schools

Open Airways in Schools is an educational curriculum for children in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade diagnosed with asthma. The program teaches children with asthma basic information that will help them control their own asthma more effectively, to make hospital visits less likely, and to reduce absences and thereby help children achieve their full potential. Every lesson is reinforced with colorful handouts for students and parents. Prior evaluation of this program has demonstrated that children who participated had two days fewer absences per year.

If your child is in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, or 5<sup>th</sup> grade, speak to your school nurse or principal to find out when the next Open Airways in Schools program is scheduled. Parents are encouraged to attend and to discuss any questions with school nursing staff.



- **K**now what worsens your child's asthma
- **I**nform your child's doctor about frequent asthma symptoms
- **C**ontrol symptoms by using long-term medicines and avoiding triggers such as cigarette smoke
- **K**ee regular doctor's visits, and ask your child's doctor for a written [Asthma Action Plan](#) and a School [Medication Administration Form](#)

### Reminders to Parents

1. Your school health team needs to know if your child has asthma.
2. Your child can receive asthma medications in school ***if the school has a current Medication Administration Form on file, signed by you and your child's healthcare provider.***
3. Please contact your school nurse if you have any questions or concerns about the management of your child's asthma in school.
4. Click here for more [information on Asthma](#) (including "Road Maps" to filling out the school Medication Form and Asthma Action Plan. This link will bring you to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Community Asthma Program website).

When children's asthma is under control, they can have:

- fewer school absences
- fewer asthma-related visits to school medical rooms and emergency departments
- greater participation in school physical fitness activities



### KICK Asthma