

# Lesson 1: Information About Asthma

## Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child is learning how to manage his or her asthma better by taking part in the American Lung Association's Open Airways for Schools program. Today in **Lesson 1**, the class learned what asthma is.

### *What Is Asthma?*

Asthma is a chronic lung disease without a known cure. This means that your child has asthma even when breathing seems normal. When a child has asthma symptoms (breathing trouble), the airways in the lungs become swollen and can become clogged, making it hard to breathe. Asthma is a real medical condition and not an emotional problem or "all in one's head."

**The good news is that although asthma cannot be cured, it can be controlled! If your child's asthma is in control, your child should:**

- Have no symptoms (even at night).
- Be able to do normal activities, including sports.
- Be able to avoid serious asthma symptoms.
- Be able to avoid side effects from medicines.

**Children in *Open Airways For Schools* will learn how to help control their asthma by:**

- Knowing what sets off their asthma and taking steps to prevent it.
- Recognizing asthma symptoms right away and taking steps to feel better.
- Talking about and solving asthma problems with parents, doctors, nurses, teachers, and friends.
- Feeling confident about taking care of their asthma every day.

Your child will have handouts to share with you after each lesson. Please take the time to look at each handout with your child.

Sincerely,

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Instructor, the American Lung Association  
Open Airways For Schools program

## Lesson 2: Tools for Managing Asthma

### Dear Parent/Guardian,

Today in **Lesson 2**, your child learned about some tools to help manage asthma: **peak flow meters**, **asthma medicines**, and an **asthma action plan**.

### *Peak Flow Meters*

#### What is a peak flow meter?

A tool that measures how fast your child can blow air out of his or her lungs.

#### What does a peak flow meter do?

- Lets you know if your child's airways are narrowing.
- Helps you know when to call a doctor for your child's asthma symptoms.
- Alerts you to give asthma medicine early.
- Helps avoid severe asthma symptoms.

#### Who should use it?

Peak flow meters can be helpful to all children over the age of 5, especially children who have symptoms 3 or more times a week when not taking asthma medicine.

### *Asthma Medicines*

#### Why take asthma medicines?

Asthma medicines keep airways in the lungs open. If children don't take the right asthma medicine, their symptoms can get worse and may even damage their lungs. Many medicines are taken when there are no symptoms, to prevent breathing trouble from starting. Regular doctor visits are important so your child has the best possible medicine and treatment plan.

#### There are two types of asthma medicines:

- **Quick-relief medicines** relax muscles around the airways and make it easier to breathe. They start to work in 5 to 10 minutes. This is the "rescue" medicine that is taken if your child is having trouble breathing.
- **Controller medicines** work to keep the airways clear and open, and are taken every day to stop asthma symptoms from happening, even when your child is feeling well. Children who don't have asthma symptoms very often may not have a daily controller medicine.

Be sure you know the difference between the types of medicine your child uses. Put a special sticker on the quick reliever, so you can recognize it in a hurry.

# Lesson 2: Tools for Managing Asthma

## Asthma Action Plan

### What is an asthma action plan?

An asthma action plan is a step-by-step guide to managing a person's asthma. Ask your child's doctor to make an asthma action plan for your child. Make sure to give a copy to your child's school, as well as babysitters and relatives who might need it.

### There are three stages in the asthma action plan:

- **The Green Zone** is the plan for when your child has no symptoms. Many children take daily medicines to prevent symptoms from starting.
- **The Yellow Zone** is the plan to follow when symptoms start. Using your child's peak flow meter regularly can help you know when symptoms are starting, even before your child can feel them.
- **The Red Zone** is the plan when symptoms are getting severe. It helps you know when to call for emergency help.

Talk to your child's doctor to find out more about using a peak flow meter, about the different medicines, and about using the asthma action plan.

Sincerely,

Instructor, the American Lung Association  
Open Airways For Schools program

**Asthma Action Plan** AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION

**General Information:**  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Emergency contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone numbers \_\_\_\_\_  
Physician/healthcare provider \_\_\_\_\_ Phone numbers \_\_\_\_\_  
Physician signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Severity Classification**  
 Intermittent  Moderate Persistent  
 Mild Persistent  Severe Persistent

**Triggers**  
 Colds  Smoke  Weather  
 Exercise  Dust  Air Pollution  
 Animals  Food  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercises**  
1. Pre-medication (how much and when) \_\_\_\_\_  
2. Exercise modifications \_\_\_\_\_

**Green Zone: Doing Well** **Peak Flow Meter Personal Best =** \_\_\_\_\_

**Symptoms**  
 Breathing is good  
 No cough or wheeze  
 Can work and play  
 Sleeps well at night

**Control Medications:**

Medicine	How Much to Take	When to Take It
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Peak Flow Meter**  
More than 80% of personal best or \_\_\_\_\_

**Yellow Zone: Getting Worse** **Contact physician if using quick relief more than 2 times per week.**

**Symptoms**  
 Some problems breathing  
 Cough, wheeze, or chest tight  
 Problems working or playing  
 Wake at night

**Control Medications and add:**

Medicine	How Much to Take	When to Take It
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Peak Flow Meter**  
Between 50% and 80% of personal best or \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

**If your symptoms (and peak flow, if used) return to Green Zone after one hour of the quick-relief treatment, THEN**  
 Take quick-relief medication every 4 hours for 1 to 2 days.  
 Change your long-term control medicine by \_\_\_\_\_  
 Contact your physician for follow-up care.

**If your symptoms (and peak flow, if used) DO NOT return to Green Zone after one hour of the quick-relief treatment, THEN**  
 Take quick-relief treatment again.  
 Change your long-term control medicine by \_\_\_\_\_  
 Call your physician/healthcare provider within \_\_\_\_\_ (hour/s) of modifying your medication routine.

**Red Zone: Medical Alert** **Ambulance/Emergency Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Symptoms**  
 Lots of problems breathing  
 Cannot work or play  
 Getting worse instead of better  
 Medicine is not helping

**Control Medications and add:**

Medicine	How Much to Take	When to Take It
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Peak Flow Meter**  
Less than 50% of personal best or \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

**Go to the hospital or call for an ambulance if:**  
 Still in the Red Zone after 15 minutes.  
 You have not been able to reach your physician/healthcare provider for help.  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Call an ambulance immediately if the following danger signs are present:**  
 Trouble walking/talking due to shortness of breath.  
 Lips or fingernails are blue.

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## Lesson 2: My Asthma Medicines

### Dear Parent/Guardian,

Please help your child fill in the information below. For the next lesson, the class will talk about solving problems with medicines and assessing symptoms.

*In Lesson 2, I learned more about the medicines I, \_\_\_\_\_, have to take for asthma.* (student name)

*What are the names of my asthma medicines?  
How does my doctor say I should take them?*

Medicine Name  
(Example: Albuterol)

When and how often?  
(Example: Before exercise)

How much and how?  
(Example: 2 puffs)

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

*What do you think is the biggest problem with my medicines?*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Child

## Lesson 3: Five Emergency Signs

### Dear Parent/Guardian,

Today in **Lesson 3**, your child learned about the **Five Emergency Signs**. These signs let you know when you need to either call the doctor or get emergency medical care right away. Please quiz your child on the Five Emergency Signs below and check them off as he or she lists them. We will talk about them during our next class.

- Wheezing or coughing that does not get better or increases after medicine has had time to work (5 to 10 minutes for quick-relief inhalers).
- Peak flow rate drops to 50% or less of personal best.
- Having a hard time breathing. Signs of this are:
  - Chest and neck are pulling in.
  - Stomach muscles are working to help get air.
  - Struggling to breathe.
- Having trouble walking or talking. Have to stop playing and can't start again.
- Fingernails or lips turn blue. **If this happens, call an ambulance right away!**

Having just one of these signs means that your child needs immediate medical care. Make sure you have an emergency plan ready to go before you need it. Your child's asthma action plan will help you remember these signs and what to do about them.

Sincerely,

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Instructor, the American Lung Association  
Open Airways For Schools program

## Lesson 4: Common Asthma Triggers

### Dear Parent/Guardian,

Today in **Lesson 4**, your child learned about some **common asthma triggers** and ways to control them. Please talk to your child about the steps you can take together:

#### *Tobacco Smoke*

Don't allow smoking in the home or car. Avoid public places that allow smoking.

#### *Pets*

Dogs, cats, birds, and rodents have animal dander (flakes of skin) that your child may be allergic to. Keep pets outdoors or think about having a pet without fur or feathers.

#### *Cockroaches*

Clean up clutter so cockroaches don't have a place to live. Don't leave food and water out that roaches can get to. Use baits instead of sprays to get rid of them.

#### *Dust Mites*

Put your child's mattress in an airtight cover. Wash all bedding and stuffed animals in hot (130°F) water weekly. Remove carpets and drapes where possible.

#### *Indoor Molds*

Keep bathrooms, kitchens, and basements well aired. Clean those areas regularly. Identify and fix any leaks, remove standing water, and replace any water-damaged materials.

#### *Pollens and Outdoor Molds*

Have your child stay indoors when the pollen count is high and keep windows closed during pollen season. Use air conditioning if possible.

#### *Strong Odors and Sprays*

Avoid using chemical products such as air fresheners, strong perfumes, cleaning supplies, pesticides.

#### *Colds and Infections*

Have your child avoid people who are sick. Ask your doctor about getting annual flu shots. Don't give your child over-the-counter cold remedies without checking with your doctor first.

## Lesson 4: Common Asthma Triggers

### *Exercise*

Ask the doctor if your child needs medicine before starting to exercise. The doctor can write it on your child's asthma action plan.

### *Weather*

Your child should dress warmly and wear a scarf or pull up a turtleneck over the mouth and nose in cold or windy weather.

### *Air Pollution*

Limit the time your child spends outdoors playing on days when air pollution is bad. To find out about high pollution days, listen to your local news and weather reports.

Working with your child and doctor, you can determine your child's asthma triggers and what to do about them. If you would like to know more about asthma triggers, contact your local Lung Association at 1-800-LUNG-USA.

Sincerely,

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Instructor, the American Lung Association  
Open Airways For Schools program

## Lesson 5: Six Ways to Stay Active

### Dear Parent/Guardian,

Today in **Lesson 5**, your child learned **Six Ways to Stay Active**. Exercise is important for all children, including children with asthma, and it is not healthy for a child to be out of shape. Regular exercise can also help to keep asthma symptoms under control. Please quiz your child on the six ways to stay active below and check them off as he or she lists them.

- Talk to my parents(s)** about an activity I want to do. I want to try (name of activity): \_\_\_\_\_
- Try the activity** to see if I can do it without wheezing or coughing. Show my parent(s) how much I can do without wheezing or coughing.
- Practice the activity** slowly so that I can do it without wheezing or coughing.
- Take a break** from the activity if I start to cough , wheeze, or feel my chest getting tight.
- Talk to the doctor** about premedicating (taking medicine before I start my activity) so I won't have asthma symptoms.
- Talk to my teachers and coaches** about my asthma.

Sincerely,

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Instructor, the American Lung Association  
Open Airways For Schools program

## **Dear Parents, Family Members, and Teachers**

You are invited to a  
Graduation Celebration for

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who has successfully completed the  
American Lung Association  
Open Airways For Schools program.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

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Instructor, the American Lung Association  
Open Airways For Schools program

## Lesson 6: Signs for Deciding to Go to School or Stay Home

### Dear Parent/Guardian,

Today in **Lesson 6**, your child learned about the **signs for deciding to go to school or stay home**. We discussed ways to make up missed schoolwork. Please go over with your child the signs for deciding whether to go to school or stay home.

### *Signs for Deciding It's OK to Go to School*

- A stuffy nose but no wheezing or coughing.
- A little wheezing that goes away after taking medicine.
- Able to do usual activities.
- No extra effort to breathe.
- Peak flow is in the green zone.

### *Signs for Deciding That You Need to Stay Home*

- A fever of 100°F or more by mouth.
- Wheezing or coughing that does not get better within 5 to 10 minutes after taking quick-relief medicine.
- Too tired or weak for normal daily activity.
- A hard time breathing.
- Peak flow is below 80% of personal best and isn't getting better with treatment.

Sincerely,

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Instructor, the American Lung Association  
Open Airways For Schools program