

# TIPS FOR COACHING A PERSON WITH ASTHMA

People with asthma can often limit their physical activity as it triggers their asthma symptoms or for the fear of a possible asthma attack. However, being physically active is important for overall health, both physically and mentally. The Activ8 for Asthma program encourages people with asthma to take part in sport and not let their asthma hold them back.

The following tips provide some direction for coaches to increase the chance of people feeling safe to participate to their highest potential.

## Understand

It is essential that coaches, staff and volunteers at your club understand asthma. You know:

- What asthma is
- What to look for if someone is having asthma
- When people with asthma should have their medication and are taking it correctly
- How to treat an asthma emergency

To learn more about asthma and physical activity undertake the

### Activ8 for Asthma online course

The course is freely available to do online and takes approximately 45 minutes. The course is broken into three modules:

1. Managing asthma
2. Asthma and Physical Activity
3. Asthma First Aid

## Observe

Watch for signs and symptoms of asthma. If a child develops asthma symptoms during sport:

- Stop the activity, follow the child's asthma action plan or commence asthma first aid
- Only return to the activity if symptom free
- Monitor for ongoing symptoms
- If symptoms return when the child starts the activity again, stop the activity and recommence asthma first aid.

Watch for possible triggers that may worsen someone's asthma, such as:

- Viral infections
- Smoke
- Cold, dry air / humidity
- Pollens (worsening hay fever)
- Grass
- Animals
- Emotions (e.g. excitement, anxiety)

## Know your athletes

Ask your athletes with asthma:

- “How does your asthma impact on you being active?”
- “What activity makes your asthma worse?”
- “Why are you playing this sport?”

Find out how their asthma impacts on them. It may only be certain activities or conditions that may affect their asthma. Having this information may allow you to make modifications to their training or when to pay closer attention to their health.

## Involve parents

It is essential to involve parents. Quite often parents are more concerned about the potential for an asthma attack than the child involved in the sport. They know their child’s health, what usually triggers their asthma, when their emotions or health may impact on their asthma and their ability to perform. Parents are required to ensure children have their asthma medication on them and are having their asthma management reviewed regularly by a doctor.

Discuss with parents:

- Encourage parents to positively encourage their children to participate in sport.
- Ask about their asthma medication. Having a copy of their asthma action plan is helpful.
- What triggers their child’s asthma? It may be exercise, but also anxiety, pollen, grass, smoke etc that may have an extra impact on a sports field.
- Your knowledge on asthma and how to deal with an asthma emergency. Make them feel confident that if anything does happen that you will be able to assist.
- Demonstrate that you are prepared to listen to their concerns and issues.
- Highlight the importance to ensure their child has their asthma medication on site.

## Be inclusive

Be sure to provide people with asthma the same opportunity to participate, whether that requires some adaptation and modified activities to ensure they participate to their best ability. ‘Normalise’ the use of asthma medication when required, so that people with asthma will take asthma medication prior to commencing the activity or when needed before symptoms become more severe. Identify any bullying or teasing that may arise from having to take medication or having asthma symptoms.

For further information or to book an information session for your club  
contact Asthma WA on 1800 278 462