

Asthma update for Parliamentarians



Information, education programs, research and advocacy for people with asthma and linked conditions

Asthma Australia is the recognised national community voice of people with asthma and linked conditions and their carers. It comprises the Asthma Foundations from each Australian state and territory working together on national policy, advocacy and programs and promoting research. Asthma Australia is a national, nongovernment, incorporated body with no political affiliations, committed to working respectfully with Indigenous and other Australians to close the gap and help people with asthma and linked conditions to breathe better.

National Asthma Week 1-7 September 2011: You can help someone with asthma

One in ten Australians has asthma – over 2 million people. The Asthma Foundations in each state and territory provide information, education, support and advocacy for the people directly concerned. They also work in partnerships to create asthma friendly communities.

A national online survey conducted for National Asthma Week asked people with asthma whether they had been able to get help when they had an asthma attack in the community. We were told about 432 asthma attacks experienced by adults and 186 by children.

For adults:

- 17% of attacks occurred in a sports setting (63 at a sports ground)
- 4% in an education setting
- 25% at work
- 36% during daily living (101 in the street)
- 18% socializing

An asthma attack can happen anywhere.

75% of people had their blue reliever medication with them – but in many cases the person was too unwell to resolve the situation themselves. In 82% of places there was no Asthma Emergency Kit available. Only 11% of locations had reliever medication a person could use: the majority of these were education settings. **Only 18% of people were helped by someone who knew what they were doing.**

We asked respondents whether they thought people in public places should have the first aid knowledge and equipment to help someone in an asthma emergency:

- 69% said everybody in a public setting should know
- 28% said key individuals should know
- 2% believed people should just look after themselves/ call an ambulance.

“I was at a shopping centre and I was so embarrassed...people just stared at me... If I had been on my own I am really scared about what would have happened”...

Parliamentary Friends of Asthma

The Parliamentary Friends are chaired by Sen Trish Crossin, Senator for the Northern Territory. The other conveners are Senator for Queensland, Sen Sue Boyce; Member for Bowman, Mr Andrew Laming MP and Member for Shortland, Ms Jill Hall MP.



Asthma Friendly Australia

Asthma Australia is committed to building partnerships that ensure every public setting is asthma friendly. This means:

- People are trained in asthma first aid
- Asthma Emergency Kits are available with reliever medication (salbutamol) and a spacer
- First aid information is displayed
- Policies explicitly refer to asthma.

Earlier this year, the Department of Parliamentary Services at Parliament House, Canberra met these criteria to become asthma friendly.

For children

In addition to our community programs, Asthma Australia has been funded by the Australian government to conduct asthma first aid training in schools and four year old preschool settings. As of 30 June 2011, over 60% of schools and 25% of preschools have staff trained to help someone in an asthma emergency.

“This should be a yearly event and compulsory for all schools.”

- Principal

This National Asthma Week we celebrated at Driver School and Preschool in the Northern Territory, the 150,000th Australian educator in Asthma First Aid.

Asthma Australia is working with Principals Australia to ensure our work in schools best meets the needs of school communities.

Asthma experts urge: Spring into action in asthma week

The first week of spring each year is also National Asthma Week and Australia's asthma experts are urging the two million plus Aussies with asthma to make sure they have an up-to-date written asthma action plan.

According to National Asthma Council Australia chairman, Dr Noela Whitby AM, asthma prevalence in this country is relatively high and hundreds of people die unnecessary deaths from asthma each year.

"We can't cure asthma but we can work together to stop it in its tracks," she said.

And, Dr Whitby says the best way to help someone you care about who has asthma is to encourage them to use the week as a prompt to update their personal written asthma action plan.

"In the same way that daylight savings signals the time to change your smoke alarm battery, National Asthma Week is the time make a resolution to see your GP and make sure you have a current and up to date action plan," she urged.

These written instructions help people with asthma, as well as their family, carers and neighbours, recognise how to tell if asthma symptoms are getting worse and what action to take.

"People with a written asthma action plan have better controlled asthma, fewer symptoms and fewer days off work or school because of asthma," Dr Whitby said.

"So, what's stopping you? There's no better prompt than National Asthma Week to make sure you are prepared to manage your condition over the coming months, especially during the upcoming allergy season which can be particularly problematic for people with asthma," she said.

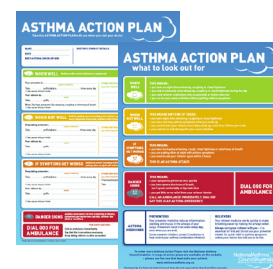
You can help someone with asthma is this year's National Asthma Week theme. The National Asthma Council Australia's media activity is highlighting this theme, targeting local media across Australia.

Written asthma action plans

An asthma action plan aims to help a person with asthma and/or their carer take early action to prevent or reduce the severity of an asthma attack

This simple tool is one of the most effective asthma interventions available – as well as being one of the cheapest.

The National Asthma Council Australia's new Asthma Action Plan, developed in consultation with leading health professionals, is proving to be very popular and is now widely available from GPs around the country.



National Asthma Council Australia

- The peak body for asthma in Australia
- Where health professionals turn for asthma education and information
- Publisher of the *Asthma Management Handbook*, the national treatment guidelines for asthma
- Provider of resources developed by health professionals, for health professionals
- Setting the standard for best practice

Resources for the whole asthma team

We provide a wide range of resources for people with asthma, their families and the whole asthma healthcare team.

Our redesigned website is packed with detailed information and advice on managing asthma and linked chronic respiratory conditions.

Highlights include our new community First Aid for Asthma chart, which provides clear guidance on what to do in an asthma emergency.

For more information, visit our new website: www.nationalasthma.org.au