Teenagers: Take Control of Asthma

Asthma affects about one in ten teenagers in Australia. By understanding and managing your asthma, you can keep it under control and stop it affecting your study, work, sport and social activities.

You have been diagnosed with asthma, what else do you need to know?

- You can continue to do what everyone else can and what you used to, just make sure you look after your asthma
- Lots of people have asthma (10% of the Australian population)
- Learn about your medications, what they do and how to take them properly
- If you let your friends know, they can help you if you have an asthma attack
- Find out what triggers your asthma symptoms and try and avoid them if you can
- Make sure you keep your reliever puffer and spacer with you all the time (this could save your life)
- Learn how to recognise what your early asthma symptoms are to help prevent a more serious asthma attack
- Book in an asthma review with your doctor (this helps to make sure you are able to manage asthma and keep doing the things you like to do)
- Talk to your doctor about what your triggers are, when your asthma symptoms get worse, how often you are taking your reliever medication and get an asthma action plan
- Learn about asthma first aid and make sure you and the people around you will know what to do if you ever have an asthma attack – this will be on your asthma action plan

Can I Exercise?
There are many top Australian athletes that manage their asthma well, which enables them to compete at a very high level. Although exercise can sometimes be a trigger for your asthma it is also a great way of keeping fit and on top of your asthma. If you normally have asthma symptoms during exercise, the following tips can help:
1. Take your reliever medication 15 minutes before warming up (this will help keep your airways open)
2. Warm up as per usual
3. Begin your activity and if you have any asthma symptoms, take your reliever medication straight away. You can go back to exercise if the symptoms go away.
4. Cool down as per usual, but also watch for asthma symptoms (they can appear up to half an hour after you have stopped being active)

Remember the two strikes and you’re out rule - if asthma symptoms come back for a second time, stop the activity and take your reliever medication again. We recommend that you should now take a break from the activity. If you want to know more about asthma and physical activity, there is more information in our ‘Staying Active with Asthma’ factsheet.

Tips to help take control your asthma
Teenagers can successfully and responsibly manage their own asthma through five simple steps:
1. A spacer is important to use with a puffer as it makes sure that the medication is reaching your airways where you want it to go you and that you are not swallowing the medication (it doesn’t have to be the ‘football’ spacer, there are many smaller types out there for you to use that fit easily into a pencil case or bag)
2. Always have your reliever puffer and spacer with you or nearby (this is what you will use when you have asthma symptoms)
3. Understand what is on your asthma action plan and that you know what to do when you have asthma symptoms and in an asthma emergency
4. Set up a reminder (e.g. on your phone or in your diary) to remind you to take your medications. Sometimes they can take time to begin to work in your body (up to several weeks). They will help improve your asthma and this means that you may need to use reliever medication less and less.
5. Try to avoid your asthma triggers as much as possible, except for exercise

Where to get help
- Your doctor, pharmacist or asthma educator.
- Your school nurse.
- The Asthma Foundation of Victoria:
  T: (03) 9326 7088 E: advice@asthma.org.au W: www.asthma.org.au

The materials contained in this publication are distributed for information purposes only. Suitable medical and professional advice should be obtained before acting on any information contained herein. ©The Asthma Foundation of Victoria reviewed June 2012