

Asthma attack symptoms

A suggestion for implementing the strategy
'Recognise and respond to an asthma attack '
from the Guide: [Asthma and learning](#)

Includes:

- What asthma looks like
- Signs of asthma
- Assess asthma symptoms
- Signs of an asthma emergency
- Use asthma action plans
- Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Asthma and learning](#)

Strategy: [Recognise and respond to an asthma attack](#)

Suggestion: [Asthma attack symptoms](#)

Date

22 June 2026

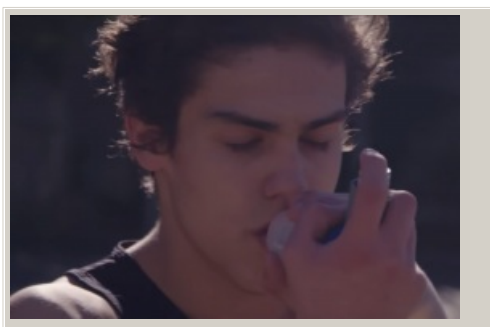
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inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/asthma-and-learning/asthma-attack-symptoms

What asthma looks like

Asthma can be easily managed with the right treatment, but it can be life-threatening.

Recognise the symptoms and respond quickly.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/OCosTBwG4Pg>

No captions or transcript

Source:

[Asthma Australia \(AUS\)](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC69wHY5dGo5HOVldFvQkq3g>

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Signs of asthma

Asthma symptoms are caused by the narrowing of the airways.

Symptoms vary over time and from person to person.

Common symptoms are:

- breathlessness
- wheezing
- tight feeling in the chest
- continuing cough.

Symptoms often occur at night, early in the morning, during, or just after activity, or from exposure to triggers such as stress, dust, chemicals, colds and flu, pollen, or tobacco smoke.

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Assess asthma symptoms

MILD

Mild symptoms might include:

- *slight wheeze*
- *mild cough*
- *symptoms when excited or running*

MODERATE

Moderate symptoms might include:

- *obvious breathing difficulties*
- *persistent cough*
- *difficulty speaking a complete sentence*

SEVERE

Severe symptoms might include:

- *distress*
- *gasping for breath*
- *difficulty speaking more than one or two words*
- *looking pale and sounding quiet*
- *complaints that the reliever medicine is not working*
- *unresponsiveness*

Source:

[Asthma + Respiratory Foundation NZ](#)

<https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/assets.asthmafoundation.org.nz/documents/Children-and-Asthma-Resource.pdf>

[View full image \(162 KB\)](#)

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Signs of an asthma emergency

Look for these signs of a serious episode:

- ✓ the child's reliever medication isn't helping
- ✓ they're finding it hard to breathe
- ✓ they're breathing hard and fast
- ✓ they're finding it hard to speak
- ✓ they're sucking in around their ribs/throat
- ✓ they're looking pale or blue.

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Use asthma action plans

When responding to an asthma attack always follow a child or young person's asthma action plan.

An asthma action plan supports you to:

- ✓ know what medicines to administer and when
- ✓ know a child or young person's possible triggers
- ✓ recognise early symptoms or flare-ups and what to do if they happen
- ✓ know how to manage an asthma attack
- ✓ know when to get emergency care.

A child or young person may be identified as having asthma but may not come with an asthma action plan.

Collect all the necessary information. Brief all staff about triggers, signs, and preventative measures to ensure the student is safe.

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Useful resources



Breathing and asthma

Read time: 1 min

A fact sheet explaining how breathing may be effected and some simple steps to take to control breathing.

Publisher: Asthma + Respiratory Foundation, NZ

[Visit website](#)



Asthma emergency action plan for children 5 years of age and under.

A pamphlet with information on recognising mild, moderate, and severe asthma symptoms.

Publisher: Asthma + Respiratory Foundation, NZ

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