

A B C D E F G H Children's Health

Has Your Child Missed School Due To Asthma?

(NAPSA)—Each school day, more than 5.2 million school-aged children with asthma report to class, but many of them may not be taking the necessary steps to keep asthma from interfering with their education. While more than 500,000 children with asthma miss at least one day of school each month, they could be leading more normal lives according to the American Lung Association®.

Most children can avoid severe asthma attacks with appropriate medication and preventative measures, and proper asthma management can improve a student's performance at school. The American Lung Association offers a range of programs for parents and professionals such as an "Asthma Action Plan," "Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools" or "Open Airways for Schools" to address asthma problems.

"Many parents take precautions to ensure their child's safety in the home," says John L. Kirkwood, CEO, American Lung Association. "But parents must also take steps to develop an asthma management plan for their children at school. Asthma management can be as important to students as their class work. Students and parents need to understand that repeat hospital visits is no way to manage your child's asthma."

Students with asthma can participate fully in physical activity when their asthma is under control. However, modifications must be made when their asthma is not fully controlled. Open communication with teachers and staff can



help school staff work individually with your child to ensure appropriate physical activity. Make sure teachers are aware your child has asthma and what the likely triggers are. Share with teachers the treatment that has been recommended by your physician and make sure they understand the possible signs that an asthma attack is occurring.

An Asthma Action Plan is available free online from the American Lung Association and has useful information to assist parents and school staff in managing a child's asthma. It includes important steps like teaching children to take their medication at regular intervals and carry rescue inhalers at all times. Parents should contact their school and obtain permission forms since the laws issuing the right to carry inhalers vary from state to state.

Make sure the school nurse or other staff members can be responsible for ensuring your child has access to medication.

The Asthma Action Plan should be completed with the assistance

of a doctor or healthcare provider and include all pertinent information about the student's asthma including medication dosage, likely environmental "triggers" and emergency contact information. Parents should always keep a copy of the plan on file with the school and update it annually or any time the student has a change in his or her treatment.

Student-focused programs such as the American Lung Association's "Open Airways for Schools" curriculum have proven to decrease the number and duration of children's asthma episodes, and to increase their grades, both of which can help rebuild or boost a child's self-confidence. Programs like this teach children how to detect the warning signs of asthma and recognize the environmental factors that can trigger an asthma attack.

To be more asthma friendly, schools should reduce or remove "triggers" such as mold, dust, chemicals, animals and other environmental factors. "Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools" is a program sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency and administered through the American Lung Association to assess indoor air quality and provide recommendations.

Anyone looking for other asthma-related programs or who wants to support fundraising Asthma Walks can contact Lung Associations to offer their help. For more information, visit www.lungusa.org or call 1-800-LUNG-USA.