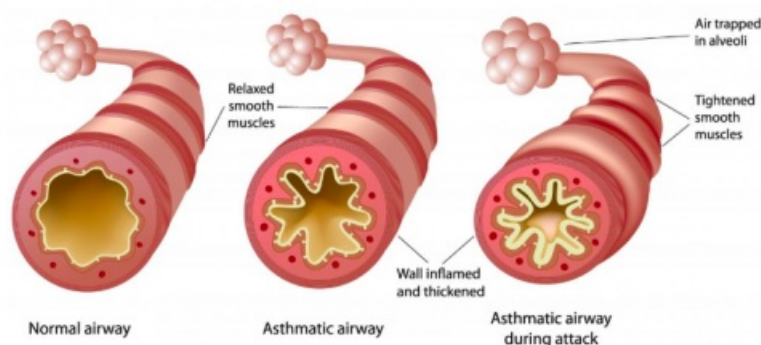


# Understanding asthma

Understanding asthma and its triggers enables you to create an environment that prevents or reduces student exposure to triggers.

## Explaining asthma

Asthma is a long-term lung condition. People with asthma have sensitive airways in their lungs, which react to triggers (inhaled allergens and irritants) making it harder for them to breathe.



Source:

[Asthma and Respiratory Foundation NZ](#)

<https://www.asthmafoundation.org.nz/your-health/living-with-asthma>

[View full image \(287 KB\)](#)

Exposure to triggers causes airways to tighten, swell inside, and make more mucus. This makes it hard to breathe in and even harder to breathe out.

## Types of asthma

- **Allergic asthma** – the most common type of asthma. Symptoms occur after breathing in allergy triggers like pollen, dust mites, or mould.
- **Exercise induced asthma (EIA)** – relatively common. Physical activities are the only trigger for EIA. They cause narrowing of the airways and produce the symptoms of asthma.

# Asthma medication

There are two main types of asthma medication.

**Preventer inhalers** are taken every day to prevent symptoms from developing and are administered at home.

**Reliever inhalers** bring short-term relief from asthma by relaxing the tight bands of muscle around the airways. They provide relief from symptoms within minutes.

The medication inside an inhaler is delivered in two ways:

- Metered dose inhalers (MDI) deliver a set amount of medication in the form of gas. When the MDI canister is pressed, it releases the medication.
- Dry powder inhalers are breath-activated devices and deliver a set amount of medication directly from the inhaler into the lungs.

## Using asthma medication



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

Closed Captions

**Source:**

[Asthma + Respiratory Foundation NZ](http://www.asthmafoundation.org.nz/)  
<https://www.asthmafoundation.org.nz/>

## Using a spacer

Spacers are clear plastic tubes with a mouthpiece or mask on one end and a hole for the inhaler at the other.

Using a spacer with a metered dose (MDI) inhaler is recommended for all ages as 50% more medicine enters the lungs.

### Guidelines for schools

- Students are responsible for their own spacer.
- It is recommended that all schools have an asthma emergency kit, which includes a spare spacer.

### Guidelines for under fives

- Babies and small children use a small-volume spacer and mask.
- Children between 2–4 years of age may transition from both mask and spacer to using only a spacer with their asthma inhaler.

Watch the video *How to use a spacer* so you know the correct technique.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/jIj28ROnaRo>

No captions or transcript

# Influences on learning

## Absenteeism and tiredness

Children with asthma typically miss attending school or ECE days due to:

- appointments with health professionals
- trips to after-hours medical centres
- symptoms of asthma
- environmental triggers.

Tiredness can be caused by coughing all night. This can affect concentration and resilience.

## Anxiety

Feeling an asthma episode could start at any time may cause a child or young person to feel anxious.

Supporting them to manage their asthma is key to reducing anxiety.

## Resources

### Understanding asthma

Understand the symptoms and triggers associated with an asthma attack.

Publisher: Asthma + Respiratory Foundation, NZ

[Visit website](#)

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