

Asthma Emergencies

It is important to recognise and treat asthma as soon as possible, so that it can be brought back under control.

Remember the A.S.T.H.M.A. steps:

ASSESS

Assess whether the attack is mild, moderate or severe

Mild symptoms might include:

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

Moderate symptoms might include:

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

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

If you or someone you know has severe asthma or is frightened, call an ambulance immediately on 111.

SIT

Sit down and lean forward slightly. Ensure your arms are supported by your knees, a table or the arms of a chair.

TREAT

Treat an asthma attack with up to 6 puffs of a reliever inhaler.

If your reliever medicine comes in a metered dose inhaler (MDI), use a spacer if possible to gain the maximum benefit of the medicine. Puff the inhaler once into the spacer and breathe 6 times (as normally as possible) in and out through the spacer. Repeat the process up to 6 times (with a total of 36 breaths)

HELP

If the person with asthma is not improving after 6 minutes call the ambulance (if you haven't already.) Remember, puff the inhaler once into the spacer and take 6 normal breaths. Continue to use the reliever inhaler 6 puffs every 6 minutes until help arrives.

In this situation you will not overdose the person by giving them the reliever every 6 minutes.

MONITOR

If improving after 6 minutes keep checking. If necessary repeat doses of the reliever inhaler.

ALL OKAY

The person with asthma can return to normal activities when they are free of wheeze, cough and breathlessness. If symptoms recur, repeat treatment, rest, and see your doctor.