



ASTHMA IN SCHOOLS

How Are West Sonoma County Schools Coping with the Asthma Epidemic?

One in five students has asthma in Sonoma County, nearly double the national average. These children suffer with a chronic disease that can leave them breathless. Asthma can be deadly, but most asthma episodes can be prevented.

Nearly
students in
Sonoma County
has asthma.

Asthma is a chronic disease that produces recurring episodes of breathing problems, including coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath. Asthma can be controlled through effective asthma management and reduction of environmental triggers.

Managing students' asthma can be a difficult task for families. While parents in a West County focus group agreed that they could easily identify their children's asthma triggers, they had difficulty in keeping to a regimen that includes taking meds regularly and responding to triggers right away. Taking medication before an asthma crisis is an important step of asthma management. However, of high school students with asthma who reported taking medication, only 16% reported taking asthma medication before physical activity and only one student reported taking a daily controller medication.

Students surveyed said environmental triggers like chalk dust, strong smells, perfume, and pollen trigger their breathing problems at school. Nearly one in four of these students reported feeling scared or worried about their asthma at school.

This past school year, the Sonoma County Asthma Coalition teamed up with school staff and administrators from the Guerneville, Monte Rio, and West Sonoma County Union High School Districts to study the problem of asthma in these districts. The following priorities were identified:

School staff would like to be more prepared to help students with asthma.

Administrators state that health and safety policies should address asthma specifically.

Health and physical education curriculum should be enhanced with lessons on asthma and what to do in an emergency.

Asthma is the No. #1 reason that students miss school due to a chronic disease.

15 million school days a year in the U.S. are missed due to asthma.

Students with asthma miss more days on average than their friends without asthma.

4 Ways to Help Students with Asthma

1 Get the Correct Forms to Your Child's School

If you have a student with asthma, make sure the correct forms are on file at your child's school.

- The first form is the asthma care plan which tells school staff about your child's specific asthma triggers, medications and what to do in an emergency.
- By law, students can self-carry their asthma medication at school. You and your student's health care provider need to complete an Authorization for Administering Medication form to allow your child to carry and use asthma medication at school.
- It's important that you list your child's asthma and medication on the emergency card so that this information is readily available in the office and on field trips.

Please contact your school nurse, health technician or front office staff to obtain the correct forms.

Sonoma County
School Nurse Services

Authorization for Administering Medication

The California Education Code provides for any pupil who is required to take, during the regular school day, medication prescribed for her/him by a physician when the school district receives the following:

1. A written statement from the physician detailing the method, amount, and time schedule the medication is to be taken.
2. A written statement from the parent or guardian of the pupil indicating the desire that the school district assist the pupil in the matter set forth in the physician's statement.
3. Medication must be in appropriately labeled prescription container or the original over-the-counter container.
4. This release is valid only for the current school year.
5. Please keep the school adequately supplied with the student's medication.
6. Any medication remaining at the end of the school year must be picked up by the parent or it will be discarded.

Student's name _____ Date _____
School _____ Grade _____ D.O.B. _____

The following medication has been prescribed for the student named above.

Medication _____ Medication _____
Dosage _____ Dosage _____
Time _____ Time _____
Side effects _____ Side effects _____

Please indicate if child is allowed to carry & has been trained to self administer emergency medication such as an inhaler or Epi-Pen. Yes _____ No _____

Physician Name _____
Physician Signature _____ Date _____

* I will supply the medication in a labeled container.
* I hereby give permission for trained school personnel to assist the child in taking medication as noted above.
* I hereby give permission for the above named physician to exchange medical information about my child with the credentialed school nurse.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

2 Know How to Help Someone Having an Asthma Emergency



Everyone working with children in a school setting should be aware of what asthma is, who has the disease, how to avoid triggers, and what to do in an emergency. 67% of high school students surveyed in the West County said they were interested in knowing how to help in an asthma emergency.

FOR AN ASTHMA EMERGENCY:

Always stay calm, keep student upright, and don't leave the student alone!

Call 911 if student is having an asthma emergency and has no rescue medication.

Call 911 if student is having an asthma emergency and is unable to control it with their rescue medication (continued shortness of breath, straining to breathe, symptoms getting worse).

Call 911 immediately if student's lips and nails are blue and student can't walk or talk.

Remember, never leave the student alone!

"The more people who know what to do the better. Being able to respond to asthma right away can prevent further damage to my child's lungs and possibly avoid a trip to the hospital."

— Denyse Del Rio, Guerneville School Parent



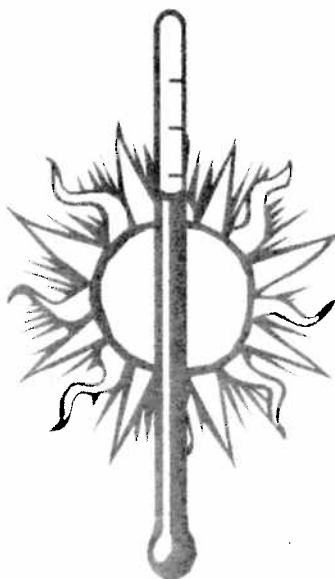
3 Decrease Asthma Triggers in the Classroom

West County students surveyed said everyone knew someone with asthma. 66% of respondents reported having a friend with asthma, and 41% knew another student with asthma. Furthermore, 58% of students surveyed said that they were interested in lowering the amount of asthma triggers at school and making the air cleaner at their school.

Everyone can help right now to make the air in the classroom cleaner and safer for their friends and fellow classmates with asthma. Asthma triggers in the air at school, from dust, scents, chemicals, art supplies, and animals can trigger asthma emergencies.

WAYS TO HELP CLEAN UP THE AIR IN YOUR CLASSROOM:

- Go scent free! Do not wear perfume, strong smelling hair or body products.
- Buy non-toxic markers and classroom products.
- Make sure air intakes and vents are not blocked, and that the H-VAC system stays on to circulate fresh air into the classroom.
- Use non-toxic products for cleaning and maintenance and for pest control in schools.
- Keep the classroom clutter and dust-free.
- Use doors and windows to vent classrooms.



4 Reduce Asthma by Addressing Global Warming

HOW IS ASTHMA RELATED TO GLOBAL WARMING?

Ozone can provoke asthma flare-ups. As the earth heats up, the amount of ozone in the air increases.

Ozone forms on hot days through a complex chemical reaction involving sunlight and pollutants such as NOX (nitrogen oxides) and volatile organic compounds. Ozone attacks lung tissue by reacting chemically with it, called "oxidizing," which some people refer to as a sunburn on the lungs. Many areas in the United States have enough ground-level ozone during the summer months to cause health problems that can be felt right away. Global warming, which we know is occurring, is adding to the problem. Higher temperatures mean more lung-harming pollution.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?

1. Walk, bicycle, carpool, or use transit, to go to school.
2. Establish safe routes to schools so that every child can walk or bike to school.
3. Buy a hybrid or alternative-fuel vehicle on your next purchase.
4. Start a campaign at your school to reduce global warming emissions by 25%.
5. Work with schools to purchase and use buses that emit less pollution.



THE SONOMA COUNTY ASTHMA COALITION

What We Plan to Do

The West County Asthma Team developed a three year plan to address asthma and clean the air at school. The plan includes the following activities:

1. Review district policies related to asthma management, school health curriculum, physical education curriculum, and environmental trigger reduction policies
2. Increase the number of students who understand how to properly manage their asthma at school
3. Educate students on how to reduce asthma triggers on campus
4. Educate school staff, teachers, PE teachers, and instructional aides on how to respond to asthma emergencies and on ways to reduce asthma triggers at school

We need your help! Contact Sonoma County Asthma Coalition today to get involved.



115 Talbot Avenue
Santa Rosa CA 95404

Ph: 707-527-5864
Fx: 707-542-6111

www.sonomaasthma.org

NONPROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #54
SANTA ROSA CA

The Sonoma County Asthma Coalition was formed in 2002 in response to the growing local concern about asthma. Approximately 30 organizations work to help the community breathe easier.

The Sonoma County Asthma Coalition's mission is to work with key stakeholders to improve the quality of life of people affected by asthma and to advocate for policies to minimize the impact of asthma in Sonoma County.

The collaboration between Sonoma County Asthma Coalition and the three school districts—Guemerville, Monte Rio, and West Sonoma County Union High School is part of a four-year pilot project funded by the American Lung Association Asthma Friendly Schools Initiative and The California Endowment.

Please contact the Sonoma County Asthma Coalition with any questions on report findings and statistics used in this report. Permission to reprint is granted with attribution going to the Sonoma County Asthma Coalition.