

Nurses' Nook

Asthma..A Good Offense is the Best Defense!

Asthma is the most prevalent chronic illness in school aged children with about 10% of school aged children having that diagnosis (CDC 2008). It varies in degree from the mildest exercise induced asthma to severe persistent asthma (rare). Most school aged children with asthma can participate in the usual activities including athletics with good asthma care.

To use a sports analogy asthma responds much better if you play offense instead of defense with it. "Playing offense" in terms of asthma means doing preventive things like eliminating asthma triggers before they cause a problem and practicing healthy habits such as handwashing, and getting a flu shot that help prevent colds and flu. Illness often makes asthma much worse. Getting new doctor's orders at the start of every school year and providing medication to the nurse is an important offensive plan of care. Taking medication (including preventive inhalers) and monitoring peak flows as prescribed by the physician can help prevent severe asthma symptoms. For example, a specific offensive strategy for a student with exercise induced asthma would be to use their inhaler 15-20" before exercise instead of waiting until he/she becomes short of breath. Practicing these strategies will allow the student with asthma to participate to their potential in both academics and athletics.

Examples of "playing defense" with asthma would be your child being exposed to triggers resulting in needing treatment for the asthma, not taking medication as instructed with the student getting sick, and not taking the controller inhaler or medicine (if the child has one). These practices can end up with a child really sick with his or her asthma, missing school, and missing athletics. The way to "win" the asthma game is to have a "great offense"!

Please feel free to call the nurse in your child's building with any questions about asthma.