

**NEVER JUDGE A
BOOK
BY ITS COVER,**

AND OTHER IMPORTANT

LESSONS ABOUT

ASTHMA FOR

PRINCIPALS

“THE GREATEST TRICK THE **DEVIL**

EVER PULLED WAS CONVINCING THE WORLD HE

DIDN'T **EXIST**.” – *The Usual Suspects*



Perhaps the greatest trick asthma ever pulled was convincing the world it's not a serious disease. But it's serious enough to cause an estimated 13.8 million asthma attacks among children under 18 in the past year. Many others have hidden or undiagnosed asthma. Scary. What are you doing to exorcise this disease?

ASTHMA
it's more serious than you think.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

Dear Principal:

This is yet another health information kit to cross your path, but don't judge it too quickly. Unlike many other kits, this one was derived from surveys and interviews of hundreds of Michigan school employees like you. As a result, we know you don't need or want big binders of superfluous information. That's why this short book contains only the most vital information necessary for you to respond effectively to asthma, and to improve the quality of life in your school. Take a few minutes to read this handbook (approximately 10 minutes). Complete your asthma checklist. Ensure that your faculty and staff read their books and complete the checklists designed especially for them. We promise you'll breathe easier about the status of asthma care in your school. After all, everyone has the right to breathe easy.

- Asthma Initiative of Michigan

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WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

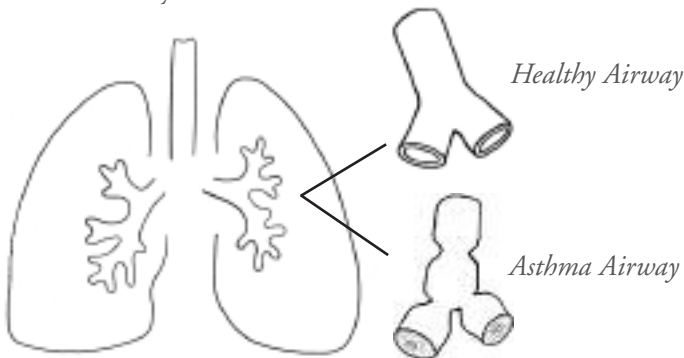
“Asthma is not serious enough for me to become concerned about it.”

True or False

FALSE: *Children can and have died from asthma episodes suffered in school. One school was sued for \$9 million for an unnecessary student death due to asthma. But thousands of children suffer less severely every day in school.*

THE DISEASE - Here's the nitty-gritty.

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory lung disease that causes the airway lining to become inflamed and swollen, blocking airflow (see diagram below). Mucus production and muscle spasm further block airflow. These complications cause asthma symptoms. Symptoms include coughing, wheezing, and breathing difficulty. These symptoms range in seriousness from bothersome to life threatening. Over time asthma can result in permanent tissue damage and chronic airway inflammation.



Worse still, no known cure for asthma exists. Asthma symptoms, however, can be managed. In fact, long-term control medicines, preventive use of quick-relief medications (e.g., inhalers and nebulizers), and reducing asthma triggers can prevent symptoms from ever developing and reduce the chances of life-threatening symptoms. Without you, however, effective asthma management is not possible.

ONE SCHOOL **COUGHED-UP**
\$9 MILLION FOR FAILING TO

RESPOND
TO ASTHMA.



Getting harder to breathe? Don't be fooled by how benign asthma seems. One California school was sued to the tune of \$9 million for its negligent response to asthma. Asthma is the most common chronic disease in Michigan schools, and its effects are often underestimated or ignored. The American Lung Association has found that asthma lurks undetected in many Michigan schools.

Can you afford \$9 million?



WHY CARE - *You should care because*

nationally asthma is one of the most common chronic diseases in children and the leading cause of school absenteeism due to chronic illness. In 2001, 14 million school absences were due to asthma. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on School Health, many parents keep their kids home because they fear school employees cannot properly manage or respond to a student with asthma. Overall, nearly 5 million children under the age of 18 have been diagnosed with asthma, and a great deal more remain undiagnosed. To make matters worse, asthma rates have nearly quadrupled in the last 15 years.

WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Managing asthma will take too much time and effort to be worthwhile.”

True or False

FALSE: *With this book, managing asthma should be simple. Here's all you really need to know:*

- 1) how to respond to an asthma emergency,*
- 2) the new laws about inhaler use,*
- 3) what triggers are common in schools, and*
- 4) how to track and manage asthma.*

You should care because asthma is more serious than many people think. It can cause death, but even those who do not suffer life-threatening symptoms risk devastating consequences associated with difficulty breathing. Students with poorly controlled asthma often feel tired, fearful, distracted, or unable to think. Many simply miss school because their parents aren't confident that the school is a safe place for a child with asthma. Obviously, your main job is to educate. However, asthma symptoms impede learning. We know asthma may seem like an minor problem. But don't be fooled. Asthma is a pervasive disease that has a significant impact on youth in your school.

You should care because you can make a significant difference in the lives of a large group of your students. Though serious, asthma management has great rewards. The difference in schools is simple... you. Like many things, managing asthma is a top-down proposition. So we suggest you make sure each of your faculty and staff receives one of these booklets and completes a checklist. Appoint a lead person, perhaps your school's nurse, to routinely identify students in need of an asthma action plan, to schedule a local training, to check for triggers, etc. (see checklist on page 17). Whether you or someone else is in charge, ultimately you are responsible for how this dangerous and often undetected disease is managed in your school.

OUTNUMBER MICHIGAN STUDENTS

2,430,000 TO **1** IN THE



TYPICAL CLASSROOM.

These invisible critters can literally run students out of class. Dust mites trigger asthma symptoms during school making it difficult, sometimes impossible to learn. Among those who reported at least one asthma attack in the previous year, children 5-17 years of age missed 14.7 million school days due to asthma nationally.

Have you dealt with all the triggers in your school?



WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Cold weather alone can trigger asthma symptoms.”

True or False

TRUE: Studies demonstrate that cold air causes symptoms in most children with asthma. Extra caution should be used to manage children's asthma when they are outside in the cold. Make sure to read your students' asthma action plans so you know how to deal with each child if weather is a trigger.

ASTHMA TRIGGERS - Many of us have a limited knowledge of asthma triggers. Below are some of the known common causes of asthma symptoms (unranked). As you read, take note of how many triggers are common in your school. Your faculty and staff must be aware of these if they are to minimize these dangers.

- Weather
 - Exposure to cold air
 - Sudden temperature change
- Vigorous exercise
- Emotional stress
- Infections
 - Common cold
 - Influenza
 - Respiratory infections
- Allergies
 - Furry/feathery animals (i.e., pets)
 - Pollen

- Feathers
- Molds
- Some foods
- House dust
- Dust mites
- Pesticides
- Dusts and Vapors from
 - Plastics
 - Grains
 - Metals
 - Wood
 - Solvents
- Air pollution
 - Perfumes
 - Cigarette smoke (even on clothing)
 - Ozone
 - Sulfur Dioxide
 - Auto exhaust
- Drugs
 - Aspirin
 - Ibuprofen
 - Some heart medications
- Others
 - New furnishings or equipment
 - Chalk
 - Dust
 - Strong odors (e.g., magic markers, perfumes, or glues)

Individual students may have additional triggers not on this list—another good reason to have an asthma action plan handy.

JUST BECAUSE

YOU CAN'T SEE IT



DOESN'T MEAN IT

ISN'T THERE.

Toilet tissue can strike fear in the hearts of many.

Unfortunately, asthma symptoms don't attract the attention renegade toilet tissue does. Asthma symptoms can be hard to spot and are easily mistaken for other less-threatening conditions like a common cough. In fact, till now you may not have noticed many students in your school with asthma. But, check the asthma clues on the following page and ask yourself... do you really know which students in your school have asthma?



ASTHMA SYMPTOMS - Triggers cause

symptoms, but people react to asthma in different ways.

Below is a list of asthma symptoms. Each symptom varies in seriousness from minor exacerbations to asthma emergencies.

Most of us cannot grade the seriousness of a given symptom

by its appearance. Therefore, you and your staff must

RESPOND TO ALL SYMPTOMS IMMEDIATELY. Remember

that this list is here for your future reference.

- Changes in breathing

- Increased or persistent coughing

- Wheezing

- Breathing through the mouth

- Shortness of breath

- Rapid breathing

- Difficulty breathing

- Other signs

- Itchy chin or neck

- “Clipped” speech (short, choppy sentences)

- Difficulty walking

- Fearful behavior

- Nostrils flare when breathing

- Fatigue

- Agitation

- Increased pulse rate

Allergy symptoms

Blue lips or fingertips

Sucking in of skin around chest/neck

- Verbal Complaints

“My chest is tight.”

“My chest hurts.”

“My neck feels funny.”

“My mouth is dry.”

“I don’t feel well.”

“I can’t catch my breath.”

REMEMBER, seemingly minor symptoms can have devastating effects. Plus, minor symptoms can quickly become life threatening. That’s just how asthma works. Therefore, don’t let your faculty ignore the seriousness of an apparently minor symptom, like persistent coughing. Regular coughing requires a quick response, which is outlined for you next.

WHAT’S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Kids with asthma are generally in worse physical shape and lazier than kids without asthma.”

True or False

FALSE: Asthma is not related to laziness. In fact, many Olympic athletes have asthma. The only difference between the student who can’t participate in gym class and the Olympic athlete is that the athlete manages asthma with proper medication. The student might not even be aware that she has asthma, let alone have the proper medications.

LOOK MA,

NO BRAINS.



Oftentimes a little knowledge can do a world of good.

For example, many people don't realize that asthma rates have quadrupled in the past 15 years.

The disease quickly has become so common that many school employees aren't adequately prepared to reduce or respond to it. That's not good. Because, while you have other things to do, students are counting on you to create a safe learning environment.

How much do you know about asthma?



Q: AT WHAT POINT DOES ABSENTEEISM AFFECT

YOUR STANDARDIZED **TEST**
SCORES?



A: Let's not find out. Asthma is the #1 cause of absenteeism among chronic diseases. Some Michigan schools are plagued with triggers that increase missed school days. So while we can't say for sure how much lower your test scores might be, we're quite sure it's bad for business.

Is asthma a risk you're willing to take?



PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST - We have

pared the following checklist down to the essentials. These are basic issues you must address if you wish to respond effectively to asthma. If you cannot respond “yes” to each of the following items, you are not addressing the bare necessities.

1. Do you have policies/requirements for removing/reducing the following potential asthma triggers in your school:

	NO	YES
a) Allergens and irritants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Mold?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Dust?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Tobacco smoke?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Dust Mites?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Cockroaches?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Pets with fur or feathers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Pesticide fumes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Paint fumes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Cleaning chemical fumes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Do you have a school nurse available in your school all day everyday?

	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a) If not, do you have someone who has been trained to oversee medications when the school nurse is unavailable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Asthma is all in the mind.”

True or False

FALSE: Occasionally emotional stress causes asthma symptoms. This has led to a misperception that asthma is a psychological disease. It's not. Asthma is real. It starts in the airways. Emotions only serve to trigger this pre-existing chronic physical condition.

	NO	YES
3. Do you have a process for identifying students with asthma in your school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you ask parents to provide the school with their child's asthma action plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Have you made it clear to students and faculty that, per state law, students may carry their own inhalers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Does the school have an emergency plan for taking care of a child with severe asthma symptoms?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Have you ensured that all of your faculty and staff have read and completed their booklets and checklists?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you provide in-service opportunities for staff to learn about asthma?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Do students have good options for fully and safely participating in physical education class and recess?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Do students have access to their medicine before exercise?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Can they choose modified or alternative activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Does your school have a clear policy about taking medications during after-school hours, field trips, or other school sanctioned events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Do you schedule any extensive building repair or cleaning to avoid exposing students to fumes, dust, and other irritants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Do you have a 504 Plan/IEP for all students with severe asthma to ensure that they receive the services they need to learn in the school environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

IT'S DIFFICULT TO LEARN **UNDER**



CONDITIONS LIKE THIS.

Not being able to breathe is really awful.

But not being able to breathe well isn't much better.

Surprisingly, too many triggers abound in Michigan classrooms that make breathing for some as hard as algebra.

How many kids in your school feel like this?



ASTHMA ACTION PLAN - Perhaps

the worst failure in responding to asthma is to not have an action plan ready for each student who needs one. You've heard about the asthma action plan repeatedly in this book. Wondering what it is? Well, we've included an asthma action plan in your folder. If you know or suspect a student has asthma, refer to the student's file for an asthma action plan. If there is not a current one on file, encourage the student's parent/guardian to follow up with their physician for an individualized plan, and keep a copy at the school for reference.

WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Children often grow out of asthma.”

True or False

FALSE: *Once you have asthma you always have it. Some children show no symptoms in their teen years. Others do. Symptoms can reappear at any age. If you wait for children to “grow out” of asthma rather than learn how to cope with and manage the disease, you put their health and psychosocial development at serious risk.*

We've also included other materials to help you manage asthma in your school. Because asthma is such a tricky disease, training your staff and identifying and managing asthma in your school should be a priority. We know you have plenty of other things to manage – even other health issues – but asthma is too prevalent and too dangerous to overlook.

RESOURCE LIST - We hope you found this manual useful. At the same time, it was never intended to be an exhaustive resource. Should you need or want more information about the disease, we've provided a list (below) of organizations and web sites that can provide you with comprehensive information, further tools and resources, speakers for staff training, etc.

1. **Michigan Resources**

a. **Asthma Initiative of Michigan:**

1-866-EZLUNGS (395-8647), www.getastmahelp.org

b. **Michigan Asthma Coalitions:**

<http://getastmahelp.org/UserCoalitionList.asp>

c. **Michigan Association of School Nurses:**

734-992-2223, <http://www.michiganschoolnurses.org/>

d. **National Jewish Medical Research Center**

(Lung line): 1-800-222-5864, www.njc.org

2. **National Resources**

a. **Allergy and Asthma Network/Mothers of**

Asthmatics, Inc.: 1-800-878-4403, www.aanma.org

• Breatherville USA,

<http://www.aanma.org/breatherville.htm>

b. **American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and**

Immunology: 1-800-822-2762, www.aaaai.org

c. **Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America:**

1-877-2-ASTHMA, www.asthmaandallergies.org

d. **American College of Allergy, Asthma, and**

Immunology: 1-800-842-7777, www.allergy.mcg.edu

- e. **American Lung Association:** 1-800-LUNG USA,
www.lungusa.org
 - School Programs
 - Open Airways for Schools
 - f. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**
 - National Center for Environmental Health:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/default.htm>
 - Strategies for Addressing Asthma with a Coordinated School Health Program:
http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/00_pdf/asthma.pdf
 - g. **NHLBI Health Information Center:**
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/index.htm>
 - h. **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:**
1-800-438-4318
 - Indoor Air Quality Information Clearinghouse,
www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/tfs/guideh.html
 - Integrated Pest Management for Schools,
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/ipm/schoolipm/index.html>
3. **National Education Association Health Information Network, Asthma and Schools website:**
www.asthmaandschools.org

**THE END,
BUT DON'T STOP NOW!**

“YOU MUST ACT.”

True or False

***TRUE:** It takes some effort, but you must respond to the threat of asthma. Use your checklist as a guide to what you need to do next. To answer any questions, and to schedule a (dreaded) in-service, just contact us. We'd love to help you respond to asthma in the best ways possible.*



For more information, more books,
or just more help with asthma, call the
American Lung Association of Michigan at
1-866EZLUNGS (1-866-395-8647)
www.getasthmahelp.org



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