

## WHAT TO DO DURING AN ASTHMA ATTACK

### Statement of the Problem

Knowing what to do when asthma symptoms increase is critical to effectively managing asthma. Sometimes asthma can worsen rapidly, so catch it early.

### Background

### ASSESSMENT

- Ask participant to describe what they do when they are having severe asthma symptoms.

### Educational Messages

- The most important things you can do during an acute asthma episode are:
- Have client bring out Action plan and keep it on hand, if possible.
- Giving asthma medicine as directed (by the Action Plan).
- Removing yourself from anything that is triggering symptoms.
- Seeking medical help as needed. Have the phone number of the clinic/consulting nurse close by.
- Give education to find and avoid triggers
- There are several things you can do to reduce your discomfort and symptoms during an asthma episode in addition to giving medication. These include:
- Calming down. Anxiety about asthma sometimes makes the symptoms worse.
- Reduce activity level if having moderate to severe symptoms.
- Find a comfortable position. Provide privacy, because embarrassment can make it hard to focus on using medication/calming down.
- Belly breathing is helpful for kids.
- Get a glass of water. A dry throat or dehydration can make symptoms worse because the airways may become more reactive.
- Remember it's never wrong to call 911 if you think you can't breathe.

### Actions

CHW Actions	Caregiver actions
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### For Adults

- Teach parent how to use action plan.
- Teach participant relaxation techniques including speaking in a calm voice, providing privacy, distraction e.g. puzzle, video
- Track worsening signs of asthma.. These are signs that the participant is working hard to breathe and needs to get medical advice or care.
- Signs include: peak flow does not get higher after rescue medication use, breathing is hard, fast and noisy, and person has trouble walking or talking.
- Don't be alone.

### For children:

- Teach child how to use action plan.
- Symptoms include:
- Nose opens wide when person breathes, spaces in between ribs or around collar bones sink in; face, lips or fingernails turn gray or blue.
- For kids: Demonstrate belly breathing
- Teach participant other relaxation techniques including speaking in a calm voice, providing privacy, distraction (do a puzzle, play with Gameboy, favorite video to watch.)
- Make a log to keep of albuterol use until symptoms are lowered.
- Don't leave child alone.

- Describe what to do when you or your child with asthma are working too hard to breathe.
- Recognize when asthma is getting worse either by symptoms or use of peak flow
- Follow action plan/take meds as prescribed and remove triggers
- Relax and decrease activity level
- Get Medical advice per action plan (call clinic for mildly increasing symptoms/call 911 if symptoms become severe.)

### Follow-up Visits

Debrief with provider how the last asthma attack was handled, what was effective or ineffective so that provider can offer support and technique instruction as needed. Discuss who is on your asthma team with your provider, or who helps you the most when you are having an asthma attack.

### Supplies

Asthma action plan, medication & medication box

### Education Handouts

First aid for asthma

## Referrals

Primary Care Provider