



# Asthma Attack

An asthma attack is a sudden worsening of asthma symptoms triggered by the tightening of muscles around the airways.

## Triggers may include

- Respiratory infection.
- Irritants e.g. cigarette, woodfire or bushfire smoke.
- Inhaled allergens e.g. dust mite, mould spores, animal danders, grass/tree pollen.
- Cold air, exercise, laughing/crying.
- Certain medication e.g. aspirin, ibuprofen.
- Food colours and flavours.
- Emotional triggers such as stress.

## Mild/Moderate Asthma Attack

- Dry, irritating, persistent cough, usually at night, early morning, with exercise or activity.
- Chest tightness.
- Shortness of breath.
- Wheezing.

## Severe Asthma Attack

- Gasping for breath.
- Severe chest tightness.
- Inability to speak more than one or two words per breath.
- Feeling distressed and anxious.
- Little or no improvement after using “reliever” medication.
- ‘Sucking in’ of the throat and rib muscles, use of shoulder muscles or bracing with arms to help breathing.
- Blue discolouration around the lips.
- Pale and sweaty skin.
- Symptoms rapidly getting worse or using reliever more than every two hours.

## What to do

### Unconscious casualty

- 1 Follow **DRSABCD** St John Action Plan.
- 2 If CPR is required it may be more difficult to deliver a breath into the casualty’s lungs.

### Conscious casualty

- 1 Follow **DRSABCD** St John Action Plan.
- 2 Sit the casualty comfortably upright. Be calm and reassuring and don’t leave the casualty alone.
- 3 Help the casualty to take four (4) puffs from their inhaler following their Asthma Action Plan (if they have one).
- 4 Wait four (4) minutes – if the casualty still cannot breathe normally, give four (4) more puffs in the same way.
- 5 If the casualty gets little or no relief from the inhaler, call **Triple Zero (000)** for an ambulance.
- 6 Keep giving four (4) puffs every four (4) minutes until medical aid arrives.

### How to give medication

#### With a spacer

- Assemble spacer.
- Remove puffer cap and **shake well**.
- Insert puffer upright into spacer.
- Place mouthpiece between teeth and seal lips around it.
- Press once firmly on puffer to **fire one (1) puff** into spacer.
- Take **four (4) breaths** in and out of spacer.
- **Repeat one (1) puff at a time until four (4) puffs taken.** Remember to **shake the puffer before each puff**.

#### Without a spacer

- Remove puffer cap and **shake well**.
- Breathe out away from puffer.
- Place mouthpiece between teeth and seal lips around it.
- Press once firmly on puffer while breathing in slowly & deeply.
- Slip puffer out of mouth.
- **Hold breath for four (4) seconds** or as long as comfortable.
- Breathe out slowly away from puffer.
- **Repeat one (1) puff at a time until four (4) puffs taken.** Remember to **shake the puffer before each puff**.

In a medical emergency call **Triple Zero (000)**

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