First Aid For Asthma

WHAT IS AN ASTHMA ATTACK?

People with asthma have extra-sensitive airways. Triggers like dust, pollens, animals, tobacco smoke and exercise may make their airways swell and narrow, causing wheeze, cough and difficulty breathing.

1. Sit the person comfortably upright. Be calm and reassuring.

2. Give 4 puffs of a blue Reliever inhaler (puffer) - Ventolin, Airomir, Bricanyl, or Asmol. Relievers are best given through a spacer, if available. Use 1 puff at a time and ask the person to take 4 breaths from the spacer after each puff. Use the person’s own inhaler if possible. If not, use the First Aid Kit inhaler or borrow one from someone.

3. Wait 4 minutes. If there is no improvement, give another 4 puffs.

4. If little or no improvement, CALL AN AMBULANCE IMMEDIATELY (DIAL 000) and state that the person is having an asthma attack.
   - Keep giving puffs every 4 minutes until the ambulance arrives.
   - Children: 4 puffs each time is a safe dose.
   - Adults: up to 6-8 puff every 5 minutes may be given for a severe attack while waiting for the ambulance.

WITH SPACER

- Shake inhaler and insert mouthpiece into spacer.
- Place spacer mouthpiece in person’s mouth and fire 1 puff.
- Ask the person to breathe in and out normally for about 4 breaths.
- Repeat in quick succession until 4 puffs have been given.

WITHOUT SPACER

- Shake inhaler.
- Place mouthpiece in person’s mouth. Fire 1 puff as the person inhales slowly and steadily.
- Ask the person to hold that breath for 4 seconds, then take 4 normal breaths.
- Repeat until 4 puffs have been given.

WHAT IF IT IS THE FIRST ATTACK OF ASTHMA?

- If someone collapses and appears to have difficulty breathing, CALL AN AMBULANCE IMMEDIATELY whether or not the person is known to have asthma.
- Give four puffs of a Reliever and repeat if no improvement.
- Keep giving 4 puffs every 4 minutes until the ambulance arrives.

- No harm is likely to result from giving a Reliever to someone who does not have asthma.
- For more information on Asthma, contact your local Asthma Foundation 1800 645 130
- For more copies of this chart, contact the National Asthma Council 1800 032 495

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