

## ■ HELP STUDENTS CONTROL THEIR ASTHMA

Good asthma management is essential for getting control of asthma. In school settings, it means helping students to:

- Follow their written asthma action plan;
  - Have quick and easy access to their asthma medications;
  - Recognize their asthma triggers (the factors that make asthma worse or cause an asthma attack); and
  - Avoid or control asthma triggers.
- You can also help by modifying physical activities to match students' current asthma status.

As Table 1 shows, good asthma management offers important benefits, including allowing students who have asthma to participate fully in physical activities and other regular school activities. ■

 Table 1: BENEFITS OF ASTHMA CONTROL

### **With good asthma management, students with asthma should:**

- Be free from troublesome symptoms day and night:
  - no coughing or wheezing
  - no difficulty breathing or chest tightness
  - no night time awakening due to asthma
- Have the best possible lung function
- Be able to participate fully in any activities of their choice
- Not miss work or school because of asthma symptoms
- Need fewer or no urgent care visits or hospitalizations for asthma
- Use medications to control asthma with as few side effects as possible
- Be satisfied with their asthma care





Table 2: ASTHMA ACTION PLAN CONTENTS

### Daily management:

- What medication to take daily, including the specific names and dosages of the medications.
- What actions to take to control environmental factors (triggers) that worsen the student's asthma.

### Recognizing and handling signs of worsening asthma:

- What signs, symptoms, and peak flow readings (if peak flow monitoring is used) indicate worsening asthma.
- What medications and dosages to take in response to these signs of worsening asthma.
- What symptoms and peak flow readings indicate the need for urgent medical attention.

### Administrative issues:

- Emergency telephone numbers for the physician, emergency department, and person or service to transport the student rapidly for medical care.
- Written authorization for students to carry and self-administer asthma medication, when considered appropriate by the health care provider and the parent or guardian.
- Written authorization for schools to administer the student's asthma medication.

ways: 1) by monitoring the student's asthma symptoms and/or 2) by having the student use a peak flow meter, which is a small, handheld device that measures how **hard** and **fast** the student can blow air out of the lungs. A drop in peak flow can warn of worsening asthma even before symptoms appear (see Appendix 2 for instructions).

Asthma action plans are most commonly divided into three colored

zones—green, yellow, and red—like a traffic light. The individual zones correspond with a range of symptoms and/or peak flow numbers determined by the student's health care provider and listed on the asthma action plan. As described on the next page, an increase in asthma symptoms, or a drop in peak flow compared with the student's personal best peak flow number, indicates the need for prompt action to prevent or treat an asthma attack.

- **GREEN ZONE = Go.** The green zone means that the student has no asthma symptoms and/or has a peak flow reading at 80% or more of the student's personal best peak flow number. The student should continue taking his or her daily long-term control medication, if prescribed.

- **YELLOW ZONE = Caution.** The yellow zone means that the student is experiencing worsening asthma symptoms and/or has a peak flow reading between 50% and 79% of the student's best peak flow number. Typically, this means the student needs a quick-relief (bronchodilator) medication—inhaled albuterol, for example—to temporarily open the airways (see next section for more information about asthma medications). In the meantime, the student should continue the

medication listed in the green zone. Follow any additional instructions provided in the asthma action plan.

- **RED ZONE = Medical Alert!** Begin emergency steps and get medical help now. A student in the red zone has severe asthma symptoms and/or a peak flow reading of less than 50% of the student's best peak flow number. The student needs a quick-relief (bronchodilator) medication, such as inhaled albuterol, to open the airways. Seek medical help right away. Your quick action could help save a life. ■

*Supporting and encouraging each student's efforts to follow his or her written asthma action plan is essential for the student's active participation in physical activities.*



### WINNERS WITH ASTHMA

**What do Justine Henin, Jerome Bettis, Amy Van Dyken, Jackie Joyner-Kersee, Bill Koch, Greg Louganis, Juwan Howard, and Jim Ryun all have in common?**

Each is a famous athlete who has asthma. They come from diverse fields: tennis, football, swimming, track and field, cross-country skiing, diving, basketball, and long-distance running.

Following their asthma action plans helped these athletes become winners.

