Using an Asthma Inhaler

You've already learned about asthma, but it is important to know how to use an inhaler just in case you have to help a child having an asthma attack.

Remember, if a child you babysit has asthma discuss care with the parents ahead of time, including any medications and specific instructions for preventing or controlling asthma attacks.

An asthma attack occurs when a trigger causes a child’s airway to swell, making it difficult to breathe. Triggers that set off asthma attacks include dust and smoke, air pollution, respiratory infections, fear or anxiety, perfume, exercise, plants and mold, medications (such as aspirin), animal dander, temperature extremes and changes in the weather.

JANE
“Hey, check this out!

BABYSITTER
“What’s that?”

JANE
“I found it in the attic.”

BABYSITTER
“Are those your grandparents?”

JANE
“Yeah.”

SAM
(Begins wheezing and having trouble breathing)

A child who is having an asthma attack may cough or wheeze, have trouble breathing or feel a tightening in the chest. As his symptoms and breathing worsen, he may panic, get confused and need help.

BABYSITTER
“Oh no, his asthma. Sam, let’s go get your inhaler. Com’on. Jane, call 9-1-1.”

JANE
“Okay.”

If a parent or guardian, is present ask for consent to help. Otherwise, assume you have consent to give care.
To care for a child having an asthma attack, call 9-1-1 and have the child sit in a position comfortable for breathing, loosen any tight clothing and assist with any medication.

Many children with asthma know how to use an inhaler. If the child can, let him use the inhaler himself, but if he can’t, you may have to help.

Check the label for the child’s name, expiration date and description of the medicine. It should say “for quick relief” or “acute attacks.” Follow any instructions on the label.

Shake the inhaler, then remove the cover from the mouthpiece.

If the child uses a spacer, attach it to the inhaler.

When using a spacer, the child should breathe out as much air as possible through his mouth, put his lips on the spacer and deliver the medication, breathing in and out deeply five or six times.

**BABYSITTER**

[counting breaths]

“One; two; three; four; five.”

Note the time when the child took the medication, and monitor his condition.

If breathing does not improve after a few minutes, repeat the medication.

The child’s breathing should improve within 5 to 15 minutes.

**BABYSITTER**

“Is it getting easier to breathe?”

If breathing does not improve, or the child’s condition worsens, ensure that 9-1-1 has been called.

Remember to call the parents to discuss any care provided.

**BABYSITTER**

“okay, I am going to give you the inhaler, press down…”

Some children don’t use a spacer with their inhaler. In that case, the child will breathe out all he can and administer the medication while taking a deep breath that he will hold for 10 seconds.

**BABYSITTER** [Counts for Sam]
“One one-thousand; two one-thousand; three one-thousand; four one-thousand; five one-thousand; six one-thousand; seven one-thousand; eight one-thousand; nine one-thousand; ten one-thousand.”