

## Thunderstorm Asthma

With the pollen season approaching, and with the impact of the thunderstorm asthma event in Melbourne last November in mind, you can be prepared for the possibility of this occurring in school time by doing the online training which now includes a module on Epidemic Thunderstorm Asthma.

The new module covers what thunderstorm asthma is, who is most at risk, recommendations for each at risk group and strategies for school staff to be prepared for such an event.

Although uncommon, thunderstorm asthma has occurred previously in Australia and overseas. Large instances of thunderstorm asthma are known as epidemic thunderstorm asthma events.

If a thunderstorm asthma event were to occur during school hours and you were faced with students having trouble breathing (whether known to have asthma or not), you would follow the Asthma First Aid protocol taught in the training for each student. This includes calling an ambulance for any student having a suspected first asthma attack. It is vital that school processes request asthma plans and in-date blue reliever medication for students with asthma and ensure that Asthma Emergency Kits (available through your local Asthma Foundation) are always properly stocked and reliever medication is checked to safeguard it has not run out and is in date.

Thunderstorm asthma can affect people living in metropolitan, regional and rural areas. It can affect people who have never been diagnosed with asthma. Our consumer survey following the Melbourne thunderstorm asthma event showed that 4 in 10 people did not have a previous history of asthma. This is why it is important that all staff can recognize the signs and symptoms of asthma and know how to administer asthma first aid.

## Kiss myAsthma App for young people

Do you know a student who is struggling to manage their asthma? Our new app for young people, Kiss myAsthma, might help. Developed by a team of medical experts at the University of Sydney with young people involved in the process, Kiss myAsthma includes such features as,

- Access to your asthma action plan
- Track your asthma symptoms, severity and attacks, making it easy to inform your doctor or specialist accurately about your asthma
- Track your mood and see how this aligns with your asthma symptoms
- Set goals and receive support from one of the app's monster assistants
- Set reminders to take your asthma preventer medications
- Asthma First Aid instructions at your fingertips for emergencies

The app has been designed to also help young people with the psychological impacts of asthma. Our survey of young people with asthma indicated that approximately 50% have a mental health issue, double that of the general population of young people.

Students can download the app for free from the App Store, Google Play and via the website [kissmyasthma.org.au](https://kissmyasthma.org.au)