



### **NEW e-mail-based program for creating asthma-friendly schools**

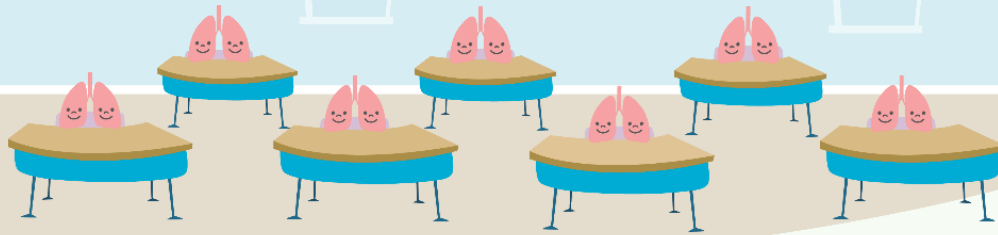
In order to provide a concise and focused supplement to the Wisconsin Asthma Coalition's school and child care walkthrough program, we are excited to introduce the new S.A.F.E. program! Program participants will receive 10 free emails throughout the school year (August - May). Each email will contain a brief educational nugget on asthma along with some corresponding "quick-win" action steps. Participants will also have a chance to receive asthma supplies for their school!

[Sign up for the program here](#) or scan the QR code below. Please share this easy new e-mail program with your local school communities so we can make our schools asthma friendly!



# SAFE

## Schools with Asthma-Friendly Environments



Asthma is a leading reason kids miss school. Let's work together to keep kids in school.



## August 2025 Back-to-school with asthma

### What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic (or long-term) disease that can't be cured, but it can be controlled. The airways of someone with asthma can become swollen, tight and filled with mucus. This can cause wheezing, chest tightness, shortness of breath and coughing.



An asthma attack happens when the airways are irritated by triggers. Common asthma triggers include:

- Air pollutants (smoke, car exhaust, chemicals, strong odors)
- Allergens (mold, dust mites, pollen, animal dander)
- Exercise
- Respiratory infections (colds and flu)
- Strong emotions (stress, anxiety, laughing)
- Weather (cold, dry air and changes in humidity)

**Reducing a child's exposure to these triggers is key to controlling asthma!**

### How can you help?

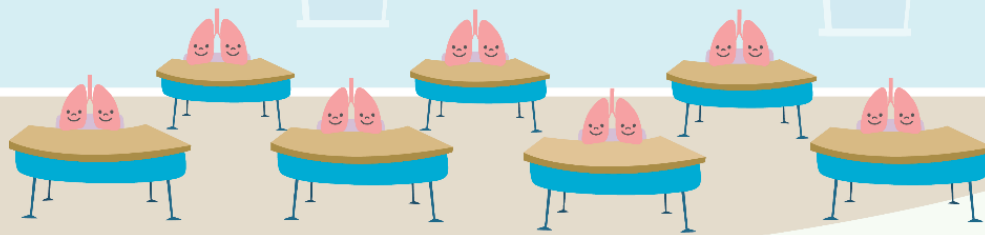
Here are steps you can take to create an asthma-friendly learning environment:

- Watch this 3 Quick Tips [video](#) (only 2 minutes long!)
- Read [10 Things Teachers Should Know About Asthma sheet](#) (helpful for all school staff!)
- Team up with your co-workers at school. Be sure they [sign up to receive these emails](#), too! **Working together** makes creating asthma-friendly schools easier and more fun.

**Want to learn more? [Email Program Leader, Carissa Hoium, MPH](#) to schedule an in-person walkthrough, a virtual meeting or a professional development session for staff at your school.**

# SAFE

## Schools with Asthma-Friendly Environments



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## September 2025 The importance of asthma action plans

### What is an asthma action plan?

An [asthma action plan \(AAP\)](#) is an important tool for asthma control. It is developed by the student's physician and is a personalized guide to managing that child's asthma!

AAPs outline how and when the child should take their asthma medication and what to do if asthma symptoms get worse while at school. They may also list the child's individual asthma triggers. Knowing each child's asthma triggers helps school staff avoid those triggers when possible.

Many AAPs are designed to look like a stoplight. They explain what to do when the child's asthma is in the green zone (asthma is doing well), the yellow zone (caution: asthma is getting worse) and the red zone (danger). Below are some examples:

**Asthma Action Plan for Home & School**

**Green Zone** - Things the child does from medicine every day, even when the child feels well.

**Yellow Zone** - Signs the child's asthma is getting worse. Asthma is getting worse, or it's not under control.

**Red Zone** - If the child is in the red zone more than 24 hours in a row, or if the child is in the yellow zone for more than 24 hours in a row, call the doctor right away!

**My Asthma Action Plan**

**Green Zone** - Things the child does from medicine every day, even when the child feels well.

**Yellow Zone** - Signs the child's asthma is getting worse. Asthma is getting worse, or it's not under control.

**Red Zone** - If the child is in the red zone more than 24 hours in a row, or if the child is in the yellow zone for more than 24 hours in a row, call the doctor right away!

### Using a student's asthma action plan is key to controlling asthma!

### What can you do?

Here are steps you can take to help create an asthma-friendly school:

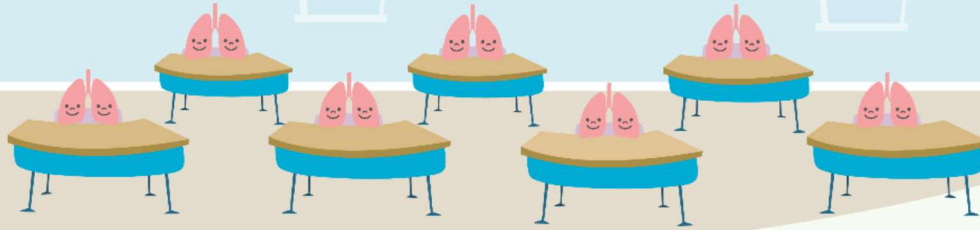
- Set up an annual meeting for the school nurse and staff to review student AAPs **together**. Each child's asthma is unique!
- Make sure each student with asthma has an AAP on file at school. Currently, fewer than half of students with asthma have plans on file. Work with your team to set a goal (e.g., "We will obtain AAPs for 75% of students diagnosed with asthma this school year").
- Contact parents and physicians to stress how important it is to have a copy of the child's AAP for your records.

### Working together, we can increase the number of AAPs in schools!

Want to learn more? [Email Program Leader, Carissa Hoium, MPH](#) to schedule an in-person walkthrough, a virtual meeting or a professional development session for staff at your school.

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**October 2025**

**The air inside our schools**

### What is in the air in our schools?

Schools are unique places. They need large numbers of children (and school staff) to spend time together in small spaces. When pollen, dust, germs and other air pollutants are floating around in the air of those small spaces, this can lead to health and learning issues. These issues include fatigue, headaches, allergy and asthma symptoms, poor school work and the spread of illness like the flu.

Many things affect the air quality in our schools:

- **Actions of students and staff** inside (and outside of) the school.
- **Air flow** system and upkeep.
- **Location** of the school.
- **Products used** inside the school.
- **Temperature and humidity** levels inside the school.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that up to 50% of all schools have indoor air quality issues. Luckily, there are steps we can take to improve the indoor air quality in our schools!

**Did you know? October is National Indoor Air Quality Awareness Month!**

### What can you do?

Here are steps you can take to help create an asthma-friendly school:

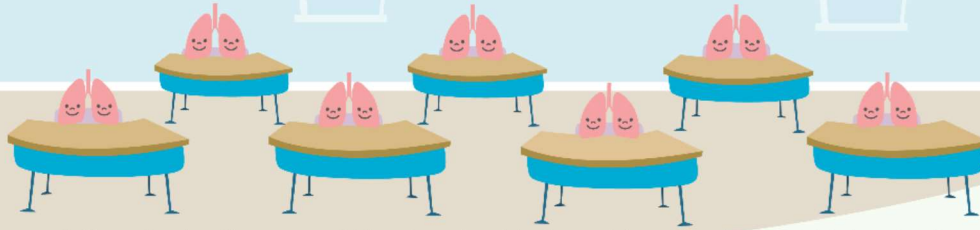
- **Schools should have their air flow systems checked each year.** During the school year, be sure to alert the facilities or maintenance staff if you notice an issue with moisture, odors, pests or air flow in your classroom. The [EPA](#) and [American Lung Association](#) provide **free tools** for schools.
- **Check your classroom space for common asthma triggers** and then make simple, low-cost changes to reduce them. Use the Wisconsin Asthma Coalition's school walkthrough guidebook and checklist (found under Asthma Resources for Schools) on [our website](#).
- **Use fans and air purifiers in your classroom.** You can even build a [DIY box air cleaner!](#)

**Working as a team, we can improve the air quality in our schools!**

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# SAFE

## Schools with Asthma-Friendly Environments



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### November 2025 Animals and asthma

#### How do animals affect asthma at school?

Thinking about a classroom pet? Animals can be great teaching tools in the classroom; however, pets can be an asthma trigger. Asthma can be triggered by the skin flakes, urine, feces, saliva and hair shed by warm-blooded mammals.

Even if you don't have an animal present in your classroom, some students bring their family pets with them to school in the form of hair and skin flakes on their clothing, backpacks and other personal items! If a child with asthma (who is triggered by pet hair) sits next to a child wearing a sweatshirt covered in cat hair, this can cause asthma symptoms and get in the way of learning.

#### What can you do?

Here are steps you can take to help create an asthma-friendly school:

- **Select fish or other cold-blooded animals for your classroom.** Remember to keep the tank or habitat well maintained to avoid moisture issues since that can lead to other asthma triggers.
- **Know which of your students have asthma and learn what their triggers are.** This information can often be found on their [asthma action plan](#). If a student is having frequent allergy or asthma symptoms in your classroom, take note of where that student is sitting. Quick fixes to seating arrangements can make a big difference!
- **Use an air purifier in your classroom.** Air purifiers with high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters can remove pet allergens from the air.

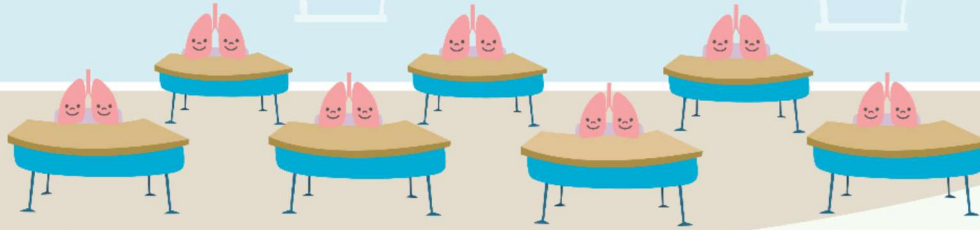
#### Can you believe it's been three months since school started? Time for some quick-wins in November!

- **Dust and dust mites:** Check for any areas collecting dust. Wipe down surfaces with a wet cloth. Wash any fabric items in hot water
- **Moisture and pests:** Check the classroom for any standing moisture and signs of pests (e.g., droppings, dead pests)
- **Remove any scented items from the classroom**

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## Schools with Asthma-Friendly Environments



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### December 2025 Odors and asthma

#### How do odors affect asthma at school?

Strong odors and scents contain a lot of concentrated molecules. When breathed in by people with asthma, the molecules can cause airways to close and trigger an asthma attack. Strong odors and scents found in schools can come from sources such as chemicals, cleaning products, perfumes, cologne, air fresheners and second- or thirdhand smoke.

#### What can you do?

Here are steps you can take to help create an asthma-friendly school:

- **Restrict odor-producing items in your classroom.** These items include air fresheners, diffusers, candles and potpourri.
- **Choose the least toxic and most environmentally-friendly cleaning products.** Don't forget to consider the time it takes for fumes to clear after cleaning products are used! Use cleaning products when students are not present in the classroom.
- **Create a scent-free policy at your school.** Scent-free policies prohibit staff and students from wearing strong scents at school. A thirdhand smoke policy prohibits staff from smelling of smoke when at school. Educate families about student hygiene.

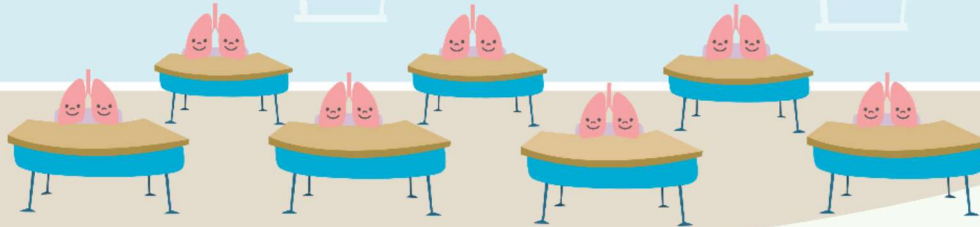
**Reducing and removing odors in your school requires a group effort. Working together, you can create an asthma-friendly environment!**

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# SAFE

## Schools with Asthma-Friendly Environments



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## January 2026

### Pests and asthma

#### How do pests affect asthma at school?

Pests are common in schools, especially in winter when they seek warm places! Pest waste and saliva contain proteins that can cause allergic reactions or trigger asthma symptoms in those sensitive to these allergens. Pests in a school can be caused by poor food handling, food storage and moisture problems. Cardboard boxes and old food that is not thrown out will attract pests.

#### What can you do?

Here are steps you can take to help create an asthma-friendly school:

- **Check for pest droppings, urine, decaying body parts and skin.** These are signs of pests in classrooms.
- **Use an integrated pest management (IPM) system.** The best approach to managing pests in a school is to use IPM. **The key to an IPM system is to remove the sources that attract pests instead of relying on pesticides.** IPM prevents pests by:
  1. Watching for signs of pests.
  2. Keeping food, water and garbage contained.
  3. Removing areas for pests to enter the building and take shelter (e.g., sealing any holes in walls, ceilings or floors and disposing of cardboard boxes).
  4. Using control products such as traps, pesticides and baits only as needed and allowed by law. Toxic chemicals (pesticides) used to manage pests can be harmful to people. Management methods that pose less risk to children and adults in the school should be used first!

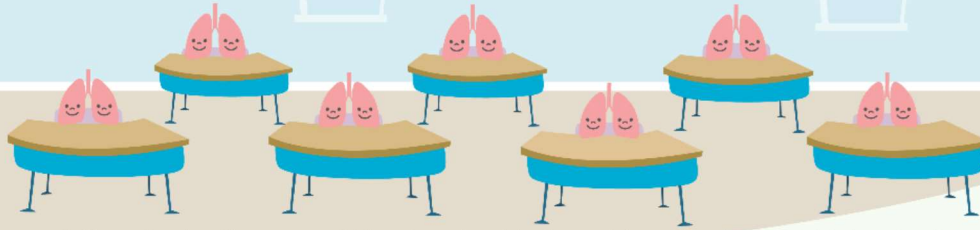
**The key is to avoid removing one asthma trigger (pests) by using another asthma trigger (pesticides)! Working together, we can implement asthma-friendly systems in our schools.**

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# SAFE

## Schools with Asthma-Friendly Environments



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## February 2026 Mold, moisture and asthma

### How does mold affect asthma at school?

Molds are fungi that grow on moist surfaces. Mold exposure can lead to breathing issues, allergic reactions and asthma attacks. All types of mold can be dangerous, and moisture is the most important concern when addressing the growth or spread of mold in the school environment.

Please note that to ensure the safety and health of everyone in the school, it may be necessary to contact a professional contractor who is qualified to respond to mold and moisture issues. The Environmental Protection Agency provides resources relating to mold cleanup, which can be found at [www.epa.gov/mold](http://www.epa.gov/mold).

### What can you do?

Here are steps you can take to help create an asthma-friendly school:

- **Check for the following signs of excess moisture:**
  - Leaks in the roof or plumbing.
  - Humidity or condensation.
  - Damp or cluttered areas near sinks, appliances and other water sources.
- Moisture sources in schools vary. **Policies may be put in place to prevent and reduce potential moisture problems.** Below are recommended solutions for each moisture source.
  - Appliances:
    - Require trays or pans underneath to catch any residual water.
    - Place appliances away from carpeting.
    - Create a policy that prohibits personal refrigerators and other cooking appliances in the classroom.
  - Plants:
    - Limit the number of plants.
    - Use water trays to collect excess water.
    - Require regular maintenance of plants.
    - Create a policy that prohibits plants from classrooms.
  - Sinks:
    - Identify the source of moisture and fix the issue.
    - Replace carpeting by sink area with hard flooring.
  - Ceilings and walls:
    - Clean mold from surface and dry surface thoroughly.
    - Identify source of moisture and fix the issue.

- Bathroom facilities:
  - Clean bathrooms regularly.
  - Remove standing water on sinks and floors.

**Addressing potential problems before mold growth can occur is best. Working together, we can implement asthma-friendly policies in our schools.**

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