

Stock Albuterol in Wisconsin Schools

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: What is stock albuterol? Is it allowed in Wisconsin?

A: Stock albuterol is the practice of keeping a supply of albuterol at school for use in emergency situations. Schools can then provide immediate treatment to someone experiencing an asthma attack or other breathing difficulties, even if that individual doesn't have their own inhaler or if their personal inhaler is not readily available.

As of March 2024, Wisconsin has a law that allows for stock albuterol in public, private or tribal schools. This vital medication can then be kept on hand and administered by trained school staff if someone is experiencing respiratory distress at school or at a school-sponsored event. Having stock albuterol at school has many benefits, including: children experiencing respiratory distress can be treated immediately, their caregivers may not have to leave work as often, the child may not have to miss school as often, the number of asthma-related EMS calls may be decreased and emergency department visits may be prevented.

Q: What does albuterol do?

A: Albuterol is a quick-relief medication used to treat or prevent bronchospasm (asthma attacks) in patients with asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, and other lung diseases. It works by relaxing smooth muscles in your airways to open air passages to the lungs and make breathing easier.

Q: Is albuterol dangerous? What if it is given to someone who doesn't have asthma?

A: Albuterol is generally safe when used properly. Under the new state law, it may be used for the treatment of respiratory distress regardless of whether the individual has an asthma diagnosis or their own prescription for albuterol. Side effects of albuterol are typically minor and can last 2-6 hours depending on dose.

Common side effects include:

- Nervousness or shakiness
- Increased heart rate (tachycardia)

Rare, more serious side effects include:

- Hives
- Swelling of the mouth or throat

Other mild side effects include:

- Throat irritation or cough
- Headache or muscle aches
- Runny nose
- Nausea or stomach pain
- Dizziness

Q: Does the school nurse need to be the one to administer stock albuterol medication?

A: No, any trained and authorized school personnel may administer albuterol in the event of respiratory distress. This is incredibly helpful when school nurses are not always present (e.g., they travel between buildings.)

Q: Can I get in trouble or be held liable for any injury resulting from albuterol administration?

A: No, the Wisconsin law includes immunity from civil liability.

Q: Does a school carrying stock albuterol replace the need for parents/guardians to ensure a student has their own albuterol medication with them during the school day?

A: No, stock albuterol does not relieve the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide their child's prescribed medication/inhaler for use at school **or** create an expectation that a school will have stock albuterol available. Stock albuterol is only intended to be used in cases of perceived respiratory distress when an individual does not have access to their personal inhaler medication, or an individual does not have a diagnosed condition or prescribed medication. All students with asthma should have an asthma action plan and their asthma medication at school.

Q: Can the same inhaler be used on multiple students?

A: One inhaler can be used for multiple people if spacers are used. A spacer is a tube-shaped device that attaches to an inhaler to help deliver inhaled aerosolized asthma medicine. Spacers are also known as holding chambers. Spacers prevent cross-contamination between users and they can make it easier for non-medical staff to administer the medication correctly in an emergency, as the spacer removes the need for perfect inhaler technique. Multiple-use spacers can be washed and sanitized. Disposable spacers are also available.

Q: How much will this cost?

A: Estimates from states that have successfully implemented stock albuterol in schools legislation show that the average cost of procuring a stock albuterol inhaler and disposable spacers can range from \$25 to \$100 annually. A single albuterol inhaler contains approximately 200 doses.

Q: Where can I find example policies, tools and other resources to help implement stock albuterol at my school?

A: Visit chawisconsin.org/initiatives/environmental-health/stock-asthma-medications/ to get started!