

ASTHMA ATTACK

Managing an asthma attack

Signs & symptoms

The patient may:

- be unable to get enough air
- be short of breath
- become anxious, subdued or panicky
- focused only on breathing
- coughing, wheezing
- pale, sweating
- blue around lips, ear lobes and fingertips
- unconscious.

WARNING

Anyone having a SEVERE asthma attack needs URGENT medical treatment. Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.

Note

Where permitted under local State or Territory regulations, and if necessary:

- use another person's reliever inhaler, or use one from a first aid kit to assist patient with a severe asthma attack
- if someone is having difficulty breathing, but has not previously had an asthma attack, assist in giving 4 puffs of a reliever and continue with 4 puffs every 4 minutes if required, until an ambulance arrives.

Management

▼ Unconscious patient

- follow DRSABCD

▼ Conscious patient

1. Help the patient into a comfortable position

- usually sitting upright and leaning forward
- be reassuring and tell patient to take slow, deep breaths — ensure adequate fresh air

2. Help with administration of patient's medication (4:4:4)

- give 4 puffs one at a time of a blue reliever inhaler (use a spacer if available)
- patient takes 4 breaths after each puff
- wait 4 minutes
- if no improvement, give another 4 puffs

3. If little or no improvement within minutes

- ensure an ambulance has been called — triple zero (000)
- keep giving 4 puffs every 4 minutes until ambulance arrives
 - **children** 4 puffs every 4 minutes
 - **adults** up to 6–8 puffs every 5 minutes

In an emergency, call triple zero (000) for an ambulance

For more information on St John first aid training and kits, visit www.stjohn.org.au or freecall 1300 360 455