

Nebuliser information for parents, carers, school and preschool staff

A nebuliser, sometimes referred to as a 'pump', is a machine used to disperse reliever asthma medication into a mist that is then inhaled through a mask or mouthpiece. Nebulisers have been prescribed as delivery devices in the past and are no longer recommended outside of the hospital setting. The best practice and current recommendation is to use a large or small spacer, also called a holding chamber, as a delivery device of reliever medication¹. (NB: If a child or student has been prescribed a nebuliser it is strongly recommended that a review occurs with the prescribing doctor in light of current best practice management of asthma)

The above recommendation has been made for the following reasons:

- Medication delivered through a spacer ensures quick relief during an asthma attack, working within minutes
- Medication dosage and effectiveness is the same via a spacer as through a nebuliser
- Spacers are portable and easy to assemble, use and clean as opposed to nebulisers
- Nebulisers are more expensive than spacers, require regular servicing and replacement of parts to remain effective and often require a grounded power source
- Spacers are easier use in an asthma emergency and require less training to operate
- Students are able to receive medication and return to normal activity much faster through use of reliever medication delivered through a spacer in mild to moderate asthma attacks

School specific regulations regarding nebulisers:

- *The Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide (2010)*, incorporating the *Victorian Schools Asthma Policy Section 4.5.10.3*, states that Schools are not required to provide a nebuliser pump for student use
- Schools are not required to undergo training on nebuliser usage
- If a student brings a nebuliser to school, it is the parents responsibility to ensure that the nebuliser has been maintained correctly
- Parents and carers may send a student to school with a nebuliser if the treating doctor has verified that the medication can only be delivered effectively through a nebuliser
- The treating doctor should provide the parents and carers with a signed and dated Asthma Action Plan with the medication dosage, frequency and method of use, with a copy also made for the school
- The Asthma Action Plan should be signed by parents/carers and updated as often as possible
- Parents/carers are expected to negotiate with the principal and at least two staff members for the use of a nebuliser on school grounds if a nebuliser has been prescribed. The two staff members selected are to be trained by parents/carers in the use of the pump and given written authorisation to administer the medication
- Training in spacer and reliever use is currently incorporated in the government funded Asthma Child and Adolescent Program, providing free staff asthma education sessions in schools and preschools

¹ The National Asthma Council Australia (2006), *Asthma Management Handbook*: revised and updated 2006