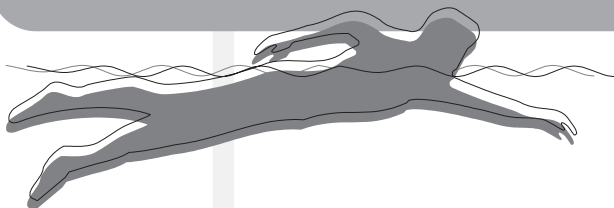


factfile

Swimming & Asthma



“I was diagnosed with asthma at the age of seven just as I began swimming. I’ve managed it over the years by listening to my doctor and taking my preventer inhalers. I never train without my reliever inhaler by the side of the pool, just in case, but very rarely have any problems’

KAREN PICKERING, SWIMMER

20% of the British Olympic Team in Athens 2004 had asthma.

Swimming & Asthma

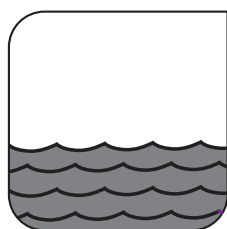
This factfile covers:

- Top tips to manage your asthma while swimming
- What to do in an asthma attack
- Where can I get more information?

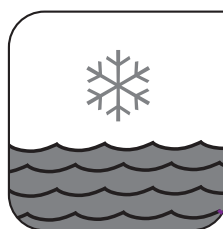
This factfile is for you to help you support children and young people with asthma to help them achieve their full potential. Many coaches and youth club organisers are concerned about working with children with asthma as they are worried about the effects of asthma medicines and the risk of an asthma attack. By following these simple steps you will enable any child with asthma to participate as much as they are able and give them the confidence that they are being looked after by an informed professional.

Swimming is usually an excellent form of exercise for children and young people with asthma. The warm humid air in the pool is less likely to trigger symptoms of asthma. However, this is not the case for everyone and chlorine and swimming in cold water can trigger some people’s asthma.

Common triggers: Swimming



Chlorine in swimming pools*



Cold water

* Some people with asthma are sensitive to chlorine but swimming is one of the best forms of exercise for most people with asthma.

Swimming & Asthma

Top tips to manage your asthma while swimming

- If swimming makes a child's asthma worse always ensure that they use their blue inhaler immediately before they warm up.
- Always start your session with warm up exercises.
- Try to avoid the things that trigger their asthma before swimming (eg, smoke, pollen).
- Ensure that the child always has their reliever (blue) inhaler with them by the side of the pool.
- If they have asthma symptoms when they are swimming, ensure they stop, take their reliever inhaler and wait five minutes or until they feel better before starting again.
- If a child has to sit out for five minutes try to involve them as much as possible for example by getting them to call encouragement, be in charge of a stopwatch or to look at other people's techniques and take notes (if they are feeling well enough to do so).
- Always end your session with warm down exercises.
- Make sure you know which children have asthma.
- Ensure the children all have an asthma attack card with them by the pool. This is especially important while swimming and is a reminder for the child and those around them about what to do if they are experiencing severe asthma symptoms. Contact Asthma UK's Supporter & Information Team (info@asthma.org.uk; 020 7786 5000) to receive your free copy.

What to do in an asthma attack

1. Give the child their reliever (blue) inhaler, immediately
2. Sit the child up and loosen tight clothing
3. If there is no immediate improvement during an attack, continue to give the child one puff of their reliever inhaler every minute for five minutes or until symptoms improve.

If their symptoms do not improve in five minutes – or if you are in doubt – call 999 or a doctor urgently. The child should continue to take one puff of reliever every minute until help arrives

The main worry for children and young people with asthma while swimming is the effect of chlorine and cold water as this may cause the muscles around the airways to tighten, making breathing more difficult. To minimise the effect of cold air ensure that everyone is warmed up thoroughly and that they have taken their inhaler beforehand.

If a child is having any problems during a swimming session always let their parents know as they may need to visit their doctor or asthma nurse for an asthma review.





Asthma UK Adviceline

Ask an asthma
nurse specialist

08457 01 02 03

asthma.org.uk/adviceline

Asthma UK website

Read the latest independent
advice and news on asthma

asthma.org.uk

Asthma UK publications

Request booklets, factfiles
and other materials with
independent, specialist
information on every
aspect of asthma

020 7786 5000

info@asthma.org.uk

Asthma UK membership

Become a member of
Asthma UK and receive
Asthma Magazine four times
a year

020 7786 5000

membership@asthma.org.uk

For further information or a poster on exercise and asthma contact:

Asthma UK, Summit House, 70 Wilson Street, London EC2A 2DB

T 020 7786 4900 **F** 020 7256 6075

Asthma UK Cymru, ADMAIL 3865, Cardiff CF1 8XS

E wales@asthma.org.uk

Asthma UK Northern Ireland, ADMAIL 3866, Belfast BT1 1TR

E ni@asthma.org.uk

Asthma UK Scotland, 4 Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1JE

T 0131 226 2544 **E** scotland@asthma.org.uk