



**Centers for
Independent Living**

**SUPPORT THE RIGHT OF WV
SCHOOL CHILDREN TO CARRY AN
INHALER**

Vote YES on HB 4271

“When you can’t breathe, nothing else matters” (*American Lung Association of West Virginia*)

ASTHMA is a chronic lung disease characterized by two main components: constriction (tightening of the muscles surrounding the airways) and inflammation (swelling & irritation of the airways). Together constriction and inflammation cause narrowing of the airways that result in symptoms such as: wheezing, coughing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath and mucus production.

There are many **Asthma Triggers** and they can vary from person to person. Asthma attacks or flare-up cans be triggered by: smoking, pets, mold & mildew, pollen, colds & infections, weather, strong odors & sprays, physical activity/exertion, and excitement or stress. Everyone with asthma needs a **fast-acting inhaler** to help treat sudden asthma symptoms and attacks and should keep the inhaler close to them at all times. An inhaler is a device that helps deliver medicine to the lungs, where it is needed, helping to reduce underlying inflammation in the airways and relieve or prevent symptomatic airway narrowing.

According to the Council of Schools Nurses, 1999 data collection, 13,773 cases of asthma among WV Students by grade were reported to the school nurse in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade.

This does **not** reflect the number of asthma attacks that are not reported to school nurses or the number of attacks that happen at home. The American Lung Association of WV reports that approximately 31,000 school-aged children are affected by asthma each year in West Virginia. Asthma causes more lost school days than any other chronic illness.

Asthma statistics in West Virginia (*Prevalence Estimates among School Children - WV Youth Tobacco Survey*):

- ▶ The prevalence of lifetime asthma was 23.2% among middle school students and 21.1% among high school students.
- ▶ About 10.5% of middle school students and 7.3% of high school students report they take prescription medication for asthma.
- ▶ In 2002 approximately 10.3% of middle school students and 8.8% of high school students had an asthma attack during the school year.
- ▶ In both middle and high schools, about 57% of all students who had asthma attacks in the past year missed one or more school days in that year due to their asthma. Asthma causes more lost days from school than any other chronic illness.
- ▶ During 1995-2001, state-wide hospital charges for inpatient care related to a primary diagnosis of asthma averaged about \$10.3 million per year.

Mountain State Centers for Independent Living joins the American Lung Association of West Virginia and urges you to **SUPPORT HB 4271** and give children the right to carry a rescue inhaler with them at all times. Quick access to rescue inhalers can mean the difference between life and death!

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