



Lowell High School Department of Physical Education A Teaching and Learning Community

PORTFOLIO HANDOUT 13 – MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Don't Let Asthma Keep You Out of the Game. Today, more than ever, asthma is not a barrier to physical activity. In fact, if you keep your asthma under control, you can do it all! Need proof? Well, did you know that:

- At the 1984 summer Olympics, 67 of the 597 American athletes had asthma. Among them, they won 41 medals.
- Twenty percent of the athletes at the 1996 summer Olympics had asthma brought on by physical activity.
- Almost 30% of the American swimmers on the 2000 summer Olympic team had asthma and used inhalers.

Asthma didn't hold them back, and it shouldn't hold you back, either!

Who has asthma?

Asthma — which makes it hard to breathe, and causes coughing and wheezing — affects about five million American kids and teens? That's almost 1 in 10! Famous people like rapper Coolio have asthma, although he's better known for his hit songs like "Gangsta's Paradise" than for his fight against the illness.

Physical Activity → Asthma?

Things like cold or dry air, dust, pollen, pollution, cigarette smoke, or stress can "trigger" asthma. This can make your body pump out chemicals that close off your airways, making it hard for air to get into to your lungs, and causing an asthma attack.

Physical activity can trigger asthma attacks too. Experts don't know for sure why physical activity sometimes brings one on, but they suspect that fast breathing through the mouth (like what happens when you get winded) can irritate the airways. In addition, when air pollution levels are high, physical activity in the afternoon is harder on the lungs than morning activity — pollution levels rise later in the day.

Get Fit

So, should you get a doctor's note and skip gym class? Sorry, no. Doctors want their asthma patients to get active, especially in asthma-friendly activities like these: swimming, bicycling, golf, inline skating, and weightlifting.

Why are these good choices if you want to be physically active?

- They let you control how hard and fast you breathe
- They let you breathe through your nose at all times
- They don't dry out your airways
- They mix short, intense activities with long endurance workouts
- You can do them in a controlled environment (for example, a gym with air that's not too cold or dry)
- Usually you do them with other people, who can help you if an attack comes on

Getting regular physical activity can improve your breathing, and lead to fewer asthma attacks. Just remember to follow these tips. (In fact, this is good advice for everyone, not just those with asthma.)

- **Ease into it.**
Start your workout with a warm-up, and don't overdo it by running five miles on your first day if you get winded walking around the block! Finish up with a cool-down.
- **Take a buddy.**
It's more fun and a friend can help if you get into trouble.
- **Respect your body.**
Stay away from the things that trigger your asthma. Help out your airways by breathing through your nose instead of your mouth. Take it easy on days when your asthma symptoms are really bugging you. And stick to the medicine routine that your doctor has set up.
- **Take breaks.**
Treat yourself to rest and drink plenty of water.
- **Mix it up.**
For example, try going inline skating one day and taking a long walk the next.

Feel Good

To feel your best, do the right stuff to control your asthma. And listen to your doctors — they're on your team!

Dr. Asthma says that people with asthma "should expect to live a life that really isn't affected by asthma, except for having to follow the directions." He also says to speak up if you are having symptoms, and remember to "keep a good attitude and keep working to control the disease." ([Wanna read the full disease detective profile?](#))

So, get out there and get moving! With good habits and today's medicines, you can go for the gold — or just join your friends on the basketball court, in the pool, on the dance floor...

- Reference - <http://www.cdc.gov/bam/activity/challenge-asthma.html>