

## **Back to school: children with asthma urged to use inhalers as a precaution**

GPs are calling on parents and carers of children with asthma in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire to start using their inhalers as they go back to school.

The advice comes as temperatures start to reduce, and children are exposed to the usual increased risk of infection as they join hundreds of other pupils after the summer break.

Evidence shows that using inhalers preventatively, ie before symptoms of wheezing occur, reduces the risk of becoming unwell. Using spacers, the plastic tube or cone-shaped devices, also significantly increases effectiveness.

It is estimated that 1 in 11 children in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire have asthma.<sup>1</sup> A child is admitted to hospital every 20 minutes in the UK because of an asthma attack.

For many, symptoms only occur during the winter months, which means that often inhalers are found to be lost, broken or out of date when families find they need them most.

The free HANDI app carries simple advice about how to care for a child with asthma or wheezy chest, along with other common childhood illnesses, and is available to download for Android phones at Google Play and for iPhone or iPad from the iPhone app store or iTunes.

Dr Kirsty Alexander, GP at Southmead & Henbury Family Practice and children's services lead for NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board said:

“

“This advice is about getting ready. You've bought the shoes and the lunch box – now just check your child's inhaler and spacer. For many children with asthma and other respiratory conditions, a daily puff on their preventative inhaler will give them that extra bit of resilience to weather the return to school.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.asthma.org.uk/about/media/facts-and-statistics/>

“The free HANDI App is also a great way to check on symptoms and how to care for children with asthma and a range of other common illnesses and well worth having at your fingertips”

“It’s an exciting and happy time for the vast majority of children. Simple preventative measures, or even just checking inhalers are working and in date, will allow them to concentrate on learning and seeing their friends, instead of going down with autumn bugs or getting wheezy as soon as the air gets damper.”

1. Asthma prevalence statistics from Asthma UK

<https://www.asthma.org.uk/about/media/facts-and-statistics/>

2. The HANDi App aims to provide advice and support to parents and carers when your child is unwell.

It offers simple and straightforward advice on what to do and who to contact, including illness-specific home assessment guidelines for six common childhood illnesses:

- Diarrhoea and vomiting
- High temperature
- Chesty baby (Bronchiolitis)
- Chesty child (Wheeze and Asthma)
- Abdominal pain
- Common newborn problems

Each of the six illnesses has a home care plan to help you provide the best support for your child and give you confidence in caring for them when they are unwell.

Download the HANDi App for Android phones at [Google Play](#) .

For iPhone or iPad, download from the [iPhone app store or iTunes](#) , using the search term 'HANDi App'.