

Activity:

Asthma Demonstration



Overview

In this activity, participants will learn what it can feel like to have asthma.

Note: People with asthma or respiratory illness should not participate in this activity. If any asthmatics are present, skip this activity or designate them to be the timers so that nobody is excluded.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the activity, participants will be able to:

- Compare and contrast normal breathing to asthmatic breathing.

Audience

6th grade to adult

Materials

- Regular drinking straws (one straw per participant)
- Coffee stirrer (one stirrer per participant)
- Timer/watch

Duration

10 minutes

Activity Preparation

Be sure to have enough supplies for all participants.

Background Information:

Asthma is not contagious but can run in families. Environmental asthma triggers include: dust, mold, unvented gas stoves, cleaning products (polish or dusting spray). During an asthma attack, the airways in your lungs (bronchi and bronchioles) become inflamed and constricted, which causes the size of the airways to decrease. The lining of the airways become larger and thicker mucus is formed. With less space in the airways, it is harder to breathe.

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Instructions

1. Distribute one regular straw and coffee stirrer to each participant.
2. Have the participants run in place for 30 seconds (without any straws/stirrers; normal breathing).
3. At the end of the 30 seconds, ask participants how running in place felt.
4. Next, have participants put the regular straw in their mouth, pinch their nose, and breathe normally through their mouth. Instruct participants to run in place for another 30 seconds.
5. Ask participants how running in place felt while breathing through a straw.
6. Have participants put the coffee stirrer in their mouth, pinch their nose, and breathe normally through their mouth. Have them run in place for 30 seconds once again.
7. Ask participants how running in place felt while breathing through a coffee stirrer.
8. Explain how the regular straws and coffee stirrers represent what it is like to have an asthma attack. Some attacks are more severe than others but require immediate action. Also explain that we want to take steps to prevent asthma symptoms, such as by reducing environmental triggers.

Adapted from: HOPE (Health Observances & Public Education) Partnership.