

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
EMT-BASIC TREATMENT PROTOCOLS**

Respiratory Emergencies/Asthma

Perform the following:

- Scene size-up and the initial assessment.
- Administer 100% oxygen using a non-rebreather delivery device at 15 liters/minute, unless the patient is unable to tolerate this device. If so, then administer oxygen using a nasal cannula at 6 liters/minute.
- Place the patient in a position of comfort.
- Ensure that advanced life support (ALS) has been requested and monitor response time.
- Obtain baseline vital signs and obtain the SAMPLE history.
- Conduct the focused assessment and physical exam.

Initiate treatment if the following are present:

- A chief complaint of difficulty breathing.
- The patient exhibits signs and symptoms of respiratory distress.
- The patient possess his/her own prescribed handheld inhaler.
- The patient is alert and physically able to use the device.

The procedure for administration is as follows:

- Be sure the medication is prescribed for the patient.
- Be sure that the patient is alert enough to use the inhaler properly.
- Check the medication's expiration date. **DO NOT ADMINISTER THE MEDICATION IF IT IS BEYOND THE DATE OF EXPIRATION.**
- Check to determine if the patient has taken any doses prior to your arrival.

NOTE: IF PRIOR TO YOUR ARRIVAL THE PATIENT HAS TAKEN THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF INHALATIONS (AS PER THE PRESCRIPTION), CONTACT MEDICAL CONTROL BEFORE ANY FURTHER MEDICATION IS ADMINISTERED.

- Be sure that the medication is at room temperature or warmer and shake vigorously before use.
- Remove the oxygen delivery device from the patient's face.
- Instruct the patient to exhale deeply.
- Have the patient assist you by placing his/her lips around the mouthpiece of the inhaler.
- Assist the patient in depressing the cartridge as he/she takes a deep inhalation.
- Instruct the patient to hold his/her breath for as long as he/she comfortably can (This will enhance the medicinal effects of the drug).
- Replace the oxygen delivery device to the patients face.
- Record the time, dose, medication, vital signs, and any change in the patient's condition after assisting with the medication.
- Allow the patient to breathe a few times before assessing the need to administer an additional dose, and do not delay transport

NOTE: IF THE PATIENT HAS A SPACER DEVICE FOR USE WITH THE INHALER, IT SHOULD BE USED, SINCE IT WILL ALLOW FOR MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF THE MEDICATION.

Contraindications

- Inability of the patient to physically assist in using the device.
- The medication is not prescribed for the patient.
- Patient has already met the maximum prescribed dose prior to the arrival of EMS.

REMEMBER: WHEN QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ARISE, CONTACT MEDICAL CONTROL.