An asthma emergency is potentially life-threatening.

Most people who suffer asthma attacks are aware of their asthma and should have an action plan and medication. They may wear a medical alert device.

In an emergency, or if a patient does not have their own reliever, use another person’s reliever (if permitted under local state or territory regulations), or one from a first aid kit.

If the patient is having difficulty breathing but has not previously had an asthma attack, follow WHAT TO DO

**Signs and symptoms**

**Mild to moderate asthma attack**
- increasingly soft to loud wheeze
- persistent cough
- minor to obvious difficulty breathing

**Asthma emergency**
- symptoms get worse very quickly
- little or no relief from inhaler
- severe shortness of breath, focused only on breathing
- unable to speak normally
- pallor, sweating
- progressively more anxious, subdued or panicky
- blue lips, face, earlobes, fingernails
- loss of consciousness

**What to do**

1. Follow DRSABCD.
2. Help the patient to sit down in a comfortable position.
3. Reassure and stay with the patient.
4. If requested, help the patient to follow their action plan.

**How to give medication (4:4:4)**

Use a spacer if available.

1. Give 4 separate puffs of blue/grey reliever puffer:
   - shake the inhaler
   - give 1 puff
   - take 4 breaths
   - repeat until 4 puffs have been given.
2. Wait 4 minutes
3. If there is no improvement, give 4 more separate puffs of blue/grey reliever as above.
4. If the patient still cannot breathe normally, call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
5. Keep giving 4 puffs every 4 minutes (as above) until medical aid arrives.

**In a medical emergency** call Triple Zero (000)

**DRSABCD** Danger ▶ Response ▶ Send for help ▶ Airway ▶ Breathing ▶ CPR ▶ Defibrillation

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