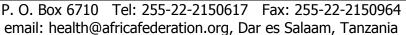


# **Central Health Board**

of Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Supreme Council





**Ref:** CHB/Bulletin/2011/111 **Date:** May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011

# **CHB NEWS BULLETIN**



# FIRST AID (A SERIES OF TUTORIALS)

### **Tutorial No. 5: Asthma Attack**

In an asthma attack the muscles of the **air passages** in the lungs go into **spasm** and the **linings** of the airways **swell**. As a result, the airways become **narrowed** and **breathing becomes difficult**.

Sometimes there is a specific trigger for an asthma attack such as:

- An allergy.
- A cold.
- Cigarette smoke.
- Extremes of temperature.
- Exercise.

People with asthma usually deal well with their own attacks by using a blue **reliever inhaler (salbutamol)**, however you may be required to assist someone having an asthma attack or having an attack for the first time.

#### **Recognition features**

• Difficulty in breathing, with a very prolonged breathing-out phase.

#### There may also be:

- Wheezing as the casualty breathes out.
- Difficulty speaking and whispering.
- Distress and anxiety.
- Coughing.
- Features of hypoxia, such as a grey-blue tinge to the lips, earlobes and nail beds (cyanosis).

#### **Treatment**

Your aims during an asthma attack are to ease the breathing and if necessary get medical help.

- You need to keep the casualty calm and reassure them.
- If they have a blue reliever inhaler then encourage them to use it. Children may have a spacer device and you should encourage them to use that with their inhaler also. It should relieve the attack within a few minutes.
- Encourage the casualty to breathe slowly and deeply.
- Encourage the casualty to sit in a position that they find



most comfortable, often leaning forward with arms resting on a table or the back of a chair. Do not lie the casualty down.



• A mild asthma attack should ease within three minutes but if it doesn't encourage the casualty to use their inhaler again.

## **Caution:**

If this is the first attack, or if the attack is severe and if any one of the following occurs:

- The inhaler has no effect after five minutes.
- The casualty is becoming worse.
- Breathlessness makes talking difficult.
- The casualty becomes exhausted.

**Dial** 112 (The Emergency number in Tanzania) for an ambulance or rush to nearest Hospital.

- Encourage the casualty to use their inhaler every five to 10 minutes.
- Monitor and record the breathing and pulse rate every 10 minutes.

If the patient becomes unconscious <u>open the airway</u> and check their breathing and be prepared to give emergency aid. Read the tips on <u>Recovery position</u> and <u>CPR</u>.

"Community's health – CHB's priority"