



General Asthma Advice

- Do not leave asthma medications within a child's reach. An overdose could be very dangerous. An adult should always supervise the administration of medication.
- An asthma action plan will be provided to you to give to the school nurse or teacher. A copy can also be faxed to the school nurse at your child's school.
- A spacer may be used with aerosol inhalers. Spacers make it easier to use the inhaler correctly enabling you or the child to receive the full dose of inhaled medication. If the spacer makes a whistling sound while you are inhaling, you are breathing in too fast, and therefore, not receiving the proper dose.
- Children or adults who are unable to use an inhaler may need to use a nebulizer, which is a machine to deliver a fine mist of medication.
- Never assume that your child has outgrown asthma. Often a child will learn to reduce activities that cause acute asthma thus masking asthma signs. With proper treatment, the child could be participating in many activities.
- All medicines are not the same. There are two basic types of medicines that you should know about: **CONTROLLERS** and **RELIEVERS**.

What medications are used to treat asthma?

Most people with asthma need two kinds of asthma medicine: one for quick relief and one for long-term control. Everyone with asthma needs a quick-relief medicine to stop asthma attacks. Many people also need a preventive medicine, or controller, every day to protect the lungs and keep asthma attacks from starting.

How safe are preventive medicines for asthma?

Preventive medicine makes the swelling of the airways in the lungs go away. Preventive medicines for asthma are safe to use every day. You will not become addicted to preventive medicines for asthma, even if you use them for many years.

Your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor may tell you to take preventive medicine every day if:

- You cough, wheeze or have a tight chest more than once a week.
- You wake up at night because of asthma.
- You have many asthma attacks.
- You have to use quick-relief medicine every day to stop asthma attacks.

Controllers are taken every day, even if you feel fine. They keep the symptoms away and prevent an asthma episode. They must be taken even when you feel fine. Relievers are taken when acute asthma has begun or the early warning signs are recognized. They should be with you at all times

and taken calmly at the first sign of asthma symptoms.

Controllers:

Taken every day (once-4 times/day). Take when you feel fine. Taken at regular times.

Relievers:

Taken when an acute attack has begun. Taken when you notice asthma signs and symptoms – example: you are in contact with cigarette smoke, you are having trouble breathing, or your peak flow reading is in the yellow zone.

- Asthma medicines are quite safe and highly effective if taken in the recommended doses. You will not become addicted to asthma medicine. Know your asthma symptoms and warning signs so you can work with your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor to make your medicine plan work for you. It is important to know exactly what to do if a serious attack does happen – consult your asthma action plan. Stay calm. Knowing how and what medications to take are very important. Let others know what to do to help in the event of a serious asthma attack.
- Is there a cure for asthma? Although asthma cannot be cured, it can be controlled. It is important to know your signs and symptoms and to have a plan for controlling and treating your asthma. With proper management, you can do almost anything with asthma.
- How can asthma be controlled? To control acute episodes of asthma, you will need to create and understand an asthma plan that works for you and know how to follow it. The plan should include: knowing and treating symptoms early; knowing how to react as your symptoms change; always following your medicine plan; knowing when medical help is needed and getting help right away.
- Be prepared. Always have asthma medicine. Always carry your quick-relief asthma medicine with you when you leave home. Follow the instructions in the box on the next page.

Act fast if an asthma attack starts

Know the signs that an asthma attack is starting:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Tight chest
- Waking up at night

If you know what started the attack, move away from it. Use your quick-relief asthma medicine. Stay calm for one hour to be sure your breathing gets better.

What if I don't get better?

Get emergency help from your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor if you do not get better. Call your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor or seek emergency care if you have any of these asthma danger signs:

Your quick-relief medicine does not help for very long or it does not help at all.

- Breathing is still fast and hard.
- It is hard to walk or talk.
- Your lips or fingernails turn gray or blue.
- Your nose opens wide when you breathe.
- Your skin is pulled in around your ribs and neck when you breathe.
- Your heartbeat or pulse is very fast.