



Asthma Medications

There are different types of asthma medications. Some are taken orally, and some are inhaled either by a hand-held inhaler and spacer device, or by a nebulizer machine. Asthma medications have two basic actions: one is to relieve the symptoms ("rescue" medicines) and the other is to treat the underlying inflammation, in order to control and prevent attacks from happening ("controller" medications). Here are some details.

RESCUE OR RELIEVER MEDICATIONS

Bronchodilators

- Albuterol
- ProAir (albuterol)
- Proventil (albuterol)
- Ventolin (albuterol)
- Xopenex (levalbuterol)

These medications are used during an asthma attack to relieve symptoms, and are known as "beta agonists." They work quickly to relax the muscles lining the airways. The airways open up, and allow the patient to breathe more easily. These medications act fast, often working within 10-15 minutes, and their effect typically lasts for four hours. Rescue medications can be given by inhaler or by nebulizer. When asthma medicines are given by hand-held inhalers, we recommend always using a "spacer" device, which is an attachment for the inhaler that makes it easier to use successfully.

CONTROLLER MEDICATIONS

Inhaled Steroids

- Flovent (fluticasone)
- Pulmicort (budesonide)
- QVAR (beclomethasone)
- Asmanex (mometasone)

Inhaled steroids are used to help control and improve ongoing asthma symptoms, and to prevent asthma attacks. And as with rescue medications, there are many brands -- some common ones listed above. They work by reducing airway inflammation. By decreasing inflammation and swelling, they help keep the airways open, so the patient may breathe more easily. These medications typically take a couple days to start working, and about a week before they reach their full effect. That is why they must be used consistently.

Inhaled steroids are given by inhaler or by nebulizer. As with rescue medications, when given by hand-held inhaler, we recommend always using a spacer device.

Leukotriene Inhibitors

- Singulair (montelukast)

Leukotriene inhibitors, for example Singulair, are also used to prevent asthma attacks and control asthma symptoms. They work by preventing the release of inflammatory substances. They are available as tablets, including chewables.

Combination medications

- Advair (fluticasone/salmeterol)
- Symbicort (budesonide/formoterol)
- Dulera (mometasone/formoterol)

For patients who need additional treatment to achieve control of their asthma, sometimes we prescribe a combination medication such as Advair, which includes a LABA (long-acting beta agonist) and an inhaled steroid.

EMERGENCY MEDICATIONS

Oral Steroids

If your child has a more severe asthma attack, oral steroids may be used for short periods of time (3-10 days). They work to quickly reduce airway inflammation to allow your child to breathe more easily. Oral steroids don't reduce growth or have any major side effects when they are used this way, as long as the treatments are not frequent or prolonged.

By keeping your child's asthma under good control, our goal is to prevent the need for oral steroids, and to avoid emergency room visits completely! We want to follow your child in the office on a regular basis and help you maintain ideal control.