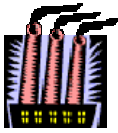


Asthma:

Information for the Patient

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a life-long condition that causes inflammation (redness and swelling) of the airways of the lungs. The main symptoms of asthma include attacks of wheezing, shortness of breath, tightness in your chest and/or coughing.



Things That Can Trigger an Asthma Attack

- Air pollution
- Dust
- Mold
- Pollen
- Tobacco smoke
- Pet dander
- Exercise
- Changes in temperature
- Some foods
- Perfume
- Viruses



Treating Your Asthma

There are two groups of medications used to treat asthma. The first are called controller medications. These medications help *prevent* asthma from getting worse; they will not stop an asthma attack once it has started. Controller medications should be used everyday, as prescribed, even if you feel like your asthma is under control.

The second group of asthma medications are quick-relief or rescue medications. These medications *stop an asthma attack* after it has started by dilating the airways (making them bigger) so it is easier to breath. These medications should only be used when you feel like you are having an asthma attack (tight chest, coughing, trouble breathing, etc). It is important to know that these medications will make you feel better for a while, but they will NOT prevent your asthma from getting worse in the long run and their overuse can even be dangerous. If you find you need to use your rescue medication more than three times in a week you should talk to your doctor.

Controller Medications

- Inhaled corticosteroids (Azmacort®, Flovent®, Pulmicort®, others)
- Long-acting inhaled beta₂ agonists and combinations (Serevent®, Advair®, others)
- Cromolyn, Nedocromil
- Leukotriene Modifiers (Accolate®, Singulair®)
- Theophylline

Rescue Medications

- Short-acting inhaled beta₂ agonists (Albuterol, Xopenex®, others)

A SPACER OR HOLDING CHAMBER CAN MAKE USING YOUR INHALERS EASIER. IT CAN DECREASE SIDE EFFECTS AND HELP MORE MEDICATION GET INTO YOUR LUNGS.

Steps for Controlling Your Asthma

There are FIVE steps to remember to keep your asthma under the best control possible:

Step 1

AVOID things that make asthma worse, such as smoke and allergens (pet dander, pollen, etc). Of course, this is not always possible, but by minimizing your exposure to these things, you can help prevent asthma attacks. It is also important that you get a flu shot every year in order to help prevent illness that could make your asthma worse.

Step 2

REMEMBER to use your controller medications exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Most controller medications are taken once or twice daily. Talk to your doctor if you are having more than two asthma attacks a week or if you feel your asthma is not controlled well enough. He or she may be able to make changes to your asthma therapy to help you better control your asthma. If you feel like you may not be getting the full benefit from your inhalers, ask your doctor or pharmacist about a device called a spacer or holding chamber that may help. Your pharmacist will also be able to teach you proper technique to improve the effectiveness of your inhalers.

Step 1

AVOID those things that make asthma worse.

Step 2

REMEMBER to use your controller medications exactly as prescribed.

Step 3

ALWAYS carry your rescue medication with you.

Step 4

MONITOR your asthma regularly with a peak flow meter.

Step 5

CALL YOUR DOCTOR OR SEEK EMERGENCY HELP if your asthma does not get better.

Step 3

ALWAYS carry your rescue medication with you. If you begin having an asthma attack, the sooner you can stop it, the better. Common signs that an asthma attack is starting include coughing, tightness in the chest, or waking at night. Try to stay calm to help your breathing get better and to make sure your rescue medication is working.

Step 4

MONITOR your asthma regularly with a peak flow meter. A peak flow meter is a simple device that you can use at home. It measures how well air moves in and out of your lungs and can detect worsening lung function *before* you have symptoms. Your doctor or pharmacist can provide you with a peak flow meter and teach you how to use it.

Step 5

CALL your doctor or seek emergency help if your asthma does not seem to be getting better or if you experience any of the following symptoms: bluish color of the lips, severe anxiety or panic due to difficulty breathing, rapid heartbeat, or confusion.