

Asthma Medications

What medications are used to treat asthma?

Most people with asthma need 2 kinds of asthma medicine: 1 for quick relief and 1 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.

Make sure you have a written treatment plan from your doctor and understand how to follow it.

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 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.

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

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If you know what started the attack, move away from it.

Use your quick-relief asthma medicine.

Stay calm for 1 hour to be sure breathing gets better.

What if I don't get better?

Get emergency help from your doctor if you do not get better.

Call your doctor or seek emergency care if you see 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.
- Lips or fingernails turn gray or blue.
- The nose opens wide when you breathe.
- Skin is pulled in around the ribs and neck when you breathe.
- The heartbeat or pulse is very fast.

Can I use the quick-relief medicine too much?

Quick-relief medicine for asthma makes you feel better for a while. It may stop the attack. With some attacks, you may think you are getting better but the airways are getting more and more swollen. Then you are in danger of having a very bad asthma attack that could kill you.

If you use quick-relief medicine every day to stop asthma attacks, this means you need a preventive medicine for long-term control.