

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ASTHMA

- CLINICAL CARE GUIDELINE — YOUTH EDUCATION HANDOUT -

ASTHMA MEDICATIONS

There are two types of asthma medicines. The first are maintenance or controller medicines (taken daily to keep their asthma under control). The second are quick-acting or rescue medicines (usually in the form of an inhaler to bring immediate relief when you have an asthma attack). Some people take their medicine with a nebulizer. A nebulizer changes liquid medicine into a fine mist that is inhaled through a mask or mouthpiece. Your doctor and pharmacist will determine which medicines are best for you, and will demonstrate how to use your medication. Your pharmacist may also help you learn how to monitor your asthma by using a peak flow meter.

Rescue medications help stop symptoms of asthma attacks by opening up airways. These medicines can relieve symptoms within minutes but they do not reduce or prevent the swelling that causes the symptoms. You need to have a rescue medication on hand for when you have an asthma attack. Some commonly used rescue medications:



» albuterol (Proventil®, Ventolin®, ProAir®),
levulbuterol (Xopenex®)
» oral steroids (prednisone, prednisolone)

Controller medications help prevent and reverse asthma attacks by decreasing the swelling in the airways. They affect the disease, not just the symptoms, but must be used every day for them to work effectively. You need to use a controller medication if you have persistent asthma. Persistent asthma is when your airways are swollen enough all the time that you have asthma symptoms (cough, wheeze, shortness of breath) often, like twice a week or more, or twice a month during sleep.

ASTHMA CONTROL MEDICATIONS INCLUDE:

- » Inhaled corticosteroids
- » oral (tablet) "leukotriene modifiers"
- » combination inhalers

MANAGING AND LIVING WITH ASTHMA

With the treatments available today, most people who have asthma can manage the disease. You may have few symptoms. You can live a normal, active life and sleep through the night without interruption from asthma.

Treating symptoms when you first notice them is important. This will help prevent a severe asthma attack. Severe asthma attacks may require emergency care. If you have trouble telling when you are having an asthma attack or your asthma is difficult to control, you should learn to monitor yourself with a peak flow meter.

ASTHMA ACTION PLANS

No matter how severe your asthma is, our goal is for you to be able to have a normal active life, through having good control of your asthma. You may need to increase your medication and/or learn more about your triggers if your asthma is not well-controlled. You can learn to control your asthma with a written plan from your doctor or pharmacist that tells you what to do when you are doing well (green zone, all clear). It will also help you decide what to do when you are not doing well (yellow and red zones). The Asthma Action Plan summarizes everything you need to know about your asthma on one sheet.

This information is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for medical treatment. You should speak to your primary care provider or make an appointment to be seen if you have questions or concerns about this information or your medical condition.