

Title: Asthma: What can I do?

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Abstract: Asthma action plans fitted to individuals using medication dose training, asthma education, and allergy skin testing is unlikely to increase the chances that a patient will take his or her inhaled steroid (control) asthma medication. Intense counseling may reduce the use of rescue inhalers short term and allow patients to be more confident in their control of asthma, but the cost of such treatment reduces the overall benefit.

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What is Asthma?

Asthma is a disease in which your airways become irritated and begin to close. This change in your airway is temporary, but can be deadly if not treated.

It is important to contact your doctor if you ever have trouble breathing.

When people have an asthma “attack,” they often experience a tight feeling in their chest, have difficulty breathing, and begin to wheeze. Wheezing describes the whistling sound that people with asthma make when they try to breathe out. A cough is also a common symptom.



What causes an asthma attack?

Things that may trigger an asthma attack include things that are common both inside and outside of the home.

Common triggers include:

- Mold
- Smoke
- Pollen
- Dust mites
- Pet hair and dander
- Cockroaches
- Cold air
- Exercise
- Flu/Illness



By avoiding these triggers, you can help prevent or reduce asthma attacks. Stopping smoking, vacuuming often, and keeping pets out of bedrooms can all be helpful for people with asthma.

What asthma medications are there?

Most people with asthma use two types of medications. One medication is good for stopping an attack once it starts, and the other is important because it prevents attacks from happening in the first place.

Asthma medications:

Albuterol or Beta-agonist inhalers are used to stop asthma attacks that have already started. Muscles in your airway tighten during an attack, and this medicine relaxes these muscles. Using a beta-agonist inhaler opens your airways and quickly stops an attack. This type of medication is known as a “rescue inhaler” because it is only used for asthma emergencies. You inhale this medication slowly and hold it for 10 seconds.



ADAM

Inhaled steroids are medications that help people with asthma avoid emergencies. Inhaled steroids work by making your airways less irritable all of the time. This means that you will be less likely to have an attack when you come in contact with a trigger. Inhaled steroids take time to work, though, and are a medication that you have to use every day, even if you are not having attacks. You inhale this medication quickly, hold it for 10 seconds, then wash your mouth out with water.

Research in asthma:

Making sure that you use your medications correctly can help reduce asthma attacks, so be sure to show your doctor how you use each of your medicines. Your doctor should also make an Asthma Action Plan with you so you know what to do when attacks do occur.

Research has shown that getting skin tests for allergies and undergoing intense asthma training is unlikely to increase the chances that a patient will take his or her inhaled steroid (control) asthma medication. Intense counseling may reduce the use of rescue inhalers short term and allow patients to be more confident in their control of asthma, but the cost of such treatment reduces the overall benefit. This makes it all the more important to have a solid asthma plan in place with your doctor.

Asthma resources:

Patient Education Institute of the National Library of Medicine
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/asthma/htm

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institutes of Health
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Asthma/Asthma_WhatIs.html

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