

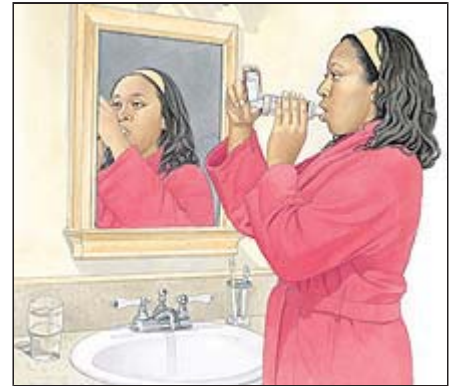
## Asthma Medications

Medications play a key role in controlling asthma. Some medications help reduce chronic inflammation. Other medications are used to treat symptoms when they occur. This sheet will help you learn to use your medications the right way so you get the right kind of help. Always take your medications as prescribed. Know the names of your medications and how and when to use them.

### Quick-Relief Medications

Quick-relief (also called “rescue”) medications work by relaxing the muscles that tighten around the airways. This helps ease symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath. Keep your quick-relief inhaler with you at all times—even if you feel okay. Quick-relief medications:

- Are inhaled when needed.
- Start to open the airways within a few minutes after you use them.
- Can help stop a flare-up once it has begun.
- Can help prevent flare-ups triggered by exercise.



**Use your inhaler before brushing your teeth. This helps make rinsing your mouth afterward become automatic.**

### Long-Term Control Medications

Long-term control (also called “maintenance” or controller) medications help reduce swelling and inflammation of the airways. This makes the airways less sensitive to triggers and less likely to flare up. Long-term control medications:

- Are taken on a schedule—for most people, every day. They are taken even when you feel fine.
- Help keep asthma under control so you’re less likely to have symptoms.
- Will NOT stop a flare-up once it has begun.

### Using Inhaled Corticosteroids

Inhaled corticosteroids are safe for long-term use. They are not the “steroids” that you hear about athletes abusing. The usual prescribed doses of corticosteroids most often cause no side effects. That’s because they’re inhaled directly into the lungs, where they’re needed. So, they have little effect on the rest of the body. The chance of side effects can be lowered even more if you:

- Make sure you always use a spacer if using a metered dose inhaler.
- Rinse your mouth, gargle, and spit out the water after using the inhaler.
- Work with your healthcare provider to find the lowest dose that controls your asthma.

### Tips for Taking Medications

Remembering to take medication each day can be hard for anyone. It can be even harder to remember when you don’t have symptoms. Try these tips for keeping on track:

- Develop a routine. For example, take long-term controllers as part of getting ready for bed.

- Make sure you understand what long-term controllers do and don't do.
- Refill your prescriptions on time, or even ahead of time, so you don't run out.
- Carry your quick-relief medication with you. If you can, keep a spare quick-relief inhaler at work, at school, or in your gym bag.
- When you travel, make sure you have enough medication to last for your entire trip.
- When traveling by air, keep your medications with you, not packed in your luggage.

## Working with Your Healthcare Provider

By working with your healthcare provider, you can get the most benefit from your medications and reduce side effects. This helps ensure you're getting the best treatment. Don't make medication changes without talking to your healthcare provider. Issues to work on with your healthcare provider include:

- **Getting to the right dose.** Over time, your healthcare provider may raise or lower the dose of controllers. The goal is to find the amount of medication to keep asthma in control, without taking more than is needed.
- **Finding the right medications for you.** Each person is unique. It may take a few tries to find the right medication or combination of medications for you. If one medication doesn't work well for you, another may work better.
- **Minimizing side effects.** If you have side effects, don't just stop taking your medication. Instead, call your healthcare provider. A new medication or dosage change may solve the problem—but you won't know unless you ask!

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