

# What Are Commonly Used Asthma Medications for Children?

Asthma medication in children is highly individualized, based on the severity of the child's symptoms, the age of the child and the ability of the child to take inhaled medications. Depending on asthma severity some don't need medications on a regular basis. The severity of asthma can change over a lifetime so medications, both type and amount, may need to change also. Some may only need one type of medication, usually the reliever variety, and others may need a combination of medications which fall into two basic categories:

## ➤ **Short-acting bronchodilators – the Rescue or Reliever Medications**

These medications are used to help open the narrowed airways and may relieve coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, or difficulty in breathing. These are usually considered "rescue medications" and are used for acute attacks or asthma flare-ups or before exercise as directed. They provide immediate relief for acute airway muscle constriction and are effective in 5 to 10 minutes but relief lasts only 4-6 hours. Examples include short acting bronchodilators (Albuterol, Xopenex, ProAir, MaxAir, e.g.)

These medications are sold as inhalers, in pill form, liquids, or injectables.

## ➤ **Anti-inflammatory medications – the Controller Medications**

These medications help to decrease or prevent chronic airway inflammation. These include:

### ◆ **nonsteroidal** anti-inflammatory medications

Cromolyn and nedocromil are two types of nonsteroidal medications that are usually inhaled by the child.

### ◆ **corticosteroids**

These medications can be given in a variety of ways. Some of them are inhaled, while others may be taken as a pill or liquid or even as an injection. The steroids taken by mouth can have more side effects than those that are inhaled. Inhaled steroids are generally safe and effective controller medications and should be taken every day as prescribed. Consult your child's physician about the best choice for your child. (Examples include Flovent, Pulmicort, Asmanex, Advair, Prednisone. e.g.)

### ◆ **anti-leukotrienes also called Leukotriene Modifiers**

These are a relatively new type of medication used to help control the symptoms of milder allergic asthma. These medications help to decrease airway narrowing and to decrease the chance of fluid build-up in the lungs. These are usually given by mouth. (Singulair, Accolate, e.g.)

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