



Why Should I Give My Child Asthma Medicine?

by Dr. Mary Noseworthy & the Community Pediatric Asthma Service

Parents worry about giving their children medicine

This information explains what asthma medicine is for and what can happen if you do not take it

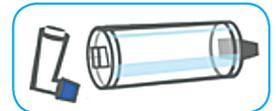
Asthma can make it hard to breathe. Sometimes it might seem like everything is normal, but this can change quickly. The doctor may try asthma medicine when a child has one or more of these breathing problems:

- coughing that doesn't go away after a cold, especially during the night
- coughing or getting tired easily when running
- wheezing – a whistling sound when they breathe
- finding it hard to take a breath

If your child's asthma is well controlled and they have no breathing problems, do not stop giving them their asthma medicine – this medicine is helping to keep them well. Talk to your doctor before you stop giving asthma medicine.

WHAT DOES ASTHMA MEDICINE DO?

Reliever Medicine (usually a blue puffer): Reliever medicine works quickly to make breathing easier, but it only last for a few hours and it does not get rid of swelling. Reliever medicine can cause shaky hands or a faster heart rate, but these things are not harmful and only last for a short time.



Controller Medicine (usually a brown, red or orange puffer): Controller medicine (corticosteroids) works on calming the lungs and getting rid of swelling so breathing problems get better. Controllers are safe to take every day because they go right into the lungs and are used in small amounts. Take a drink, rinse your mouth or brush your teeth after you take it and you should not have any trouble.

In an emergency, corticosteroids are given at a much higher dose than they usually are – often as a liquid or pill, to quickly improve breathing problems. Because this medicine travels through the whole body and not just the lungs, it may affect a child's mood. Your doctor will talk to you about any concerns they might have about your use of this medicine.

Using corticosteroid puffers every day is the best way we know to prevent breathing problems and emergency visits or hospital stays.

WHAT IF I DON'T GIVE THE ASTHMA MEDICINE?

If children don't get their asthma medicine, you could notice:

- Poor sleep because of coughing
- Missing school because of breathing problems
- Not being able to keep up with their friends at play or sports
- Not growing as much as you expect because so much energy is spent trying to breathe
- More emergency visits or hospital stays because of breathing problems

If you have any worries about asthma medicine, talk to your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or asthma educator. Following your Asthma Action Plan and using asthma medicine every day is the best way we know to make sure children with asthma have no breathing problems.



This material is designed for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction and/or treatment. If you have specific questions, please consult your doctor or appropriate healthcare professional.