

Medicines for Lung Disease

There are many medicines used to treat lung disease. Some of the medicines are pills and others are inhalers. This sheet will give you some general information on the groups of medicines. If you have questions about any medicine you are taking or its side effects, be sure to ask your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or therapist. You can also ask for more written information on your medicines. Keep in mind that you should use your fast acting inhaler and nebulizer treatment before exercise as directed by your doctor, nurse or therapist.

Fast acting versus long acting medicines

Lung diseases that cause bronchospasms, like asthma, often are treated with medicines that are fast acting. The medicine is taken as needed to prevent or ease the spasms of the airways. These are often a type of inhaler. You may hear your doctor or therapist call this type your rescue inhaler.

Some other medicines in inhalers and most of the pills used for treating lung diseases are long acting medicines. These are used to prevent breathing problems, but they will not stop bronchospasms once they start. These are most often taken each day on a set time schedule to work best to control breathing problems.

Be sure to know which fast acting medicine you have to help stop an asthma attack.

More on next page →

Learn more about your health care.

Bronchodilators

Beta Agonists:

These medicines relax and open the air passages in your lungs to help make breathing easier.

Some of the medicines in this group include:

- Albuterol sulfate, sold as brand name Ventolin or Proventil and works in 5 to 15 minutes
- Formoterol fumarate, sold as brand name Foradil or Performist and works in 5 to 20 minutes
- Levalbuterol hydrochloride, sold as brand name Xopenex and works in 10 to 17 minutes
- Metaproterenol sulfate, sold as brand name Alupent and works in 5 minutes
- Pirbuterol acetate, sold as brand name MaxAir and works in 15 to 30 minutes
- Salmeterol xinofoate, sold as brand name Serevent and works in 1 to 2 hours

Anti-Cholinergics:

These medicines are used on a regular schedule to prevent bronchospasms, but they are not used when a quick response is needed. The medicine is inhaled. They are used to treat chronic bronchitis, emphysema and other lung diseases.

Medicines in this group include:

- Ipratropium bromide, sold as brand name Atrovent and works in 30 minutes to 1 hour
- Tiotropium bromide, sold as brand name Spiriva

Anti-Inflammatory Medicines

Inhaled Corticosteroids:

These medicines are inhaled to prevent asthma attacks and reduce inflammation of the airways. They are like hormones made in your body.

These are used on a daily basis to treat asthma and other lung conditions. Rinse your mouth with water and spit the water out after using these inhalers to prevent mouth sores or white patches in the mouth or throat.

Medicines in this group include:

- Beclomethasone dipropionate, sold as brand name Beconase AQ or Qvar
- Budesonide, sold as brand name Pulmicort
- Ciclesonide, sold as brand name Alvesco
- Flunisolide, sold as brand name Aerobid or Aerospan
- Fluticasone propionate, sold as brand name Flovent
- Triamcinolone acetonide, sold as brand name Azmacort
- Mometasone furoate, sold as brand name Asmanex

Systemic Corticosteroids:

These medicines are given as pills to treat flare-ups. These medicines are like hormones made in your body. They are most often used for a short time.

Medicines in this group include:

- Methylprednisolone, sold as brand name Medrol
- Prednisone

Combination inhaled compounds:

These medicines have 2 different medicines combined in the inhalers. They work together to treat lung disease and are taken as scheduled doses.

Medicines in this group include:

- Formoterol fumarate and budesonide, sold as brand name Symbicort and works in 15 minutes. Combines one quick response with a steroid.
- Ipratropium and Albuterol, sold as brand name Combivent and works in 15 minutes. Combines one quick response and one long acting bronchodilators.

- Salameterol and Fluticasone, sold as brand name Advair and works in 1 to 2 weeks. Combines a bronchodilator with a steroid.

Methylxanthines:

These medicines are pills that are used to open the airways and make it easier to breathe. These are used to treat asthma, bronchitis and emphysema.

Medicines in this group include:

- Theophylline, sold as brand name Theo-24, Theochron, Theolair, Uniphyl and others

Leukotriene Modifiers:

These medicines are used to stabilize immune responses for people with asthma. They are taken on a daily schedule to treat asthma but they will not stop an asthma attack once it starts.

Medicines in this group include:

- Montelukast sodium, sold as brand name Singulair
- Zafirlukast, sold as brand name Accolate
- Zileuton, sold as brand name Zyflo

Mast Cell Stabilizers:

These medicines are used to treat asthma. They work to prevent constriction of air passages from allergies. They are taken on a daily schedule.

Medicines in this group include:

- Cromolyn sodium, sold as brand name Intal
- Nedocromil sodium, sold as brand name Tilade

✦ **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**