

Importance of Controller Medicines

Asthma is a disease that causes swelling of the airways. When airways are inflamed, they start to swell. This can cause them to react to many different things. When airways are inflamed you can have frequent asthma episodes or attacks. To help keep your asthma under control it is important to take all medicine as prescribed by your provider.

There are two main kinds of asthma medicines.

- Long-term control medicine
- Rescue or quick-relief medicine

Controller medicines are used to “control” your asthma. They keep your airways clear. They also reduce mucus in your lungs. These medicines have a long term effect. They must be taken daily, even when you are feeling well. They may take days or weeks to start working so you want to always take your daily dosage. These medicines will reduce coughing and asthma attacks helping you get a better night’s rest.

Controller medicines come in two (2) forms. These are:

- Bronchodilators
- Corticosteroids

Bronchodilators help relax your airways making it easier to breathe for up to 12 hours. If you have frequent asthma symptoms, another type of medicine may be preferred. This type is called a corticosteroid. These can be taken through an inhaler. They have been proven to help keep asthma in control. The risk of any side effects is minimal.

Rescue medicines are another type of asthma medicine. These are to be used when you are having an asthma episode. These help quickly open the airways. They last just a short while.

It is vital to keep your routine of taking controller medicines. Your need to use your rescue medicines will be less. Always talk to your provider before making any decision about your medicine. Together you can figure out which controller medicine is best for you.

Contents

Importance of Controller Medicines.....	1
Pneumonia and COPD.....	2
Flu Complications	2
Breathing and Coughing Exercises	3
Tips to Remember to Take Your Medicine	4
Travel and Asthma	5
Questions About Your Health?.....	6

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Pneumonia and COPD

A cold, the flu and pneumonia are lung infections. People with COPD can get very sick if they have pneumonia. This is a serious disease, especially when you have COPD. That's because the lungs are already weak. When you have pneumonia:

- The lungs get filled with white mucus and other fluids.
- That makes it hard for oxygen to reach the blood.
- There is not enough oxygen in the blood. So the body can't work the way it should.

Do what you can to keep from getting it. Ask your provider if you need this shot and when you should get it.

Flu Complications

Most people who get influenza (flu) will recover in a few days to less than two weeks. Some people will develop complications as a result of the flu. The flu can make chronic health problems such as asthma and COPD worse. For example, people with asthma may experience asthma attacks while they have the flu.

Examples of flu complications include:

- Pneumonia
- Bronchitis
- Sinus and ear infections

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get the flu, even healthy people. Serious problems from the flu can also happen at any age. Some people are at higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications. These include:

- People 65 years and older
- people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions such as:
 - asthma
 - COPD
 - Heart Disease
 - Diabetes
- pregnant women
- young children

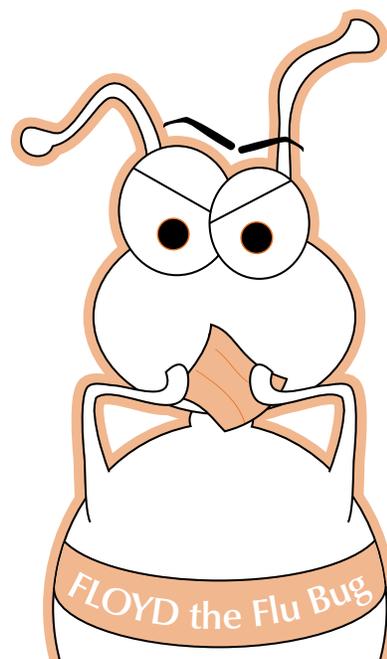
How do I reduce my risk?

Flu is unpredictable and how severe it is can vary widely from one season to the next. Take the necessary steps to prevent from getting the flu. **Start by getting the flu shot.** The flu shot can reduce your risk of getting the flu. People

you live with should get a flu shot too. Then they won't increase your chance of getting the flu.

Here are other tips that can help you stay healthy this flu season:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home and rest.



Breathing and Coughing Exercises

COPD is a lung disease. This condition can make it hard to breathe. If you have COPD you should do breathing exercises. There are many to choose from. Purse-lip breathing and diaphragmatic breathing are two examples. These may help you make it easier to breathe. When used correctly, these exercises can help to keep you from getting short of breath during activity.

Keep doing these exercises until they are easy for you. Coughing is also important to keep your lungs clear.

Purse-lip Breathing Exercise

Purse-lip breathing is one of the best ways to control shortness of breath. Use it when you start to feel short of breath. Or use it when it becomes harder to do activities.

1. Sit in a chair with your head supported.
2. Breathe in slowly through your nose until your lungs are filled up.
3. Don't hold your breath. Purse (pucker) your lips as if you were going to whistle. Then let the air out slowly.
4. Take twice as long to breathe out as you did to breathe in. A good rule is to breathe in for 4 seconds and breathe out for 6-8 seconds.
5. Repeat.

Diaphragmatic Breathing Exercises (Belly Breathing)

Belly breathing helps the diaphragm (muscle at the bottom of your lungs) move. This lets you take more air into your lungs and makes breathing easier.

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent. Put a pillow under your head. After you do this exercise for some time, you can try it sitting in a chair.
2. Put the palm of one hand on your belly. Put the palm of your other hand on your chest.
3. Breathe in slowly through your nose. Your belly should push out against your hand. Your chest should not move.
4. Tighten your belly muscles. Breathe out slowly through your mouth. Keep your lips pursed. You should feel your belly go down.

If you feel dizzy as you do this, breathe more slowly.

Start by doing this exercise for 5 to 10 minutes, 3 or 4 times a day. You can slowly increase the amount of time you do this.

Coughing Exercise

Follow the steps below to clear the mucus from your lungs.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair.
2. Lean your head forward slightly.
3. Place both feet firmly on the ground.
4. Breathe in slowly and deeply.
5. Try to hold your breath for 3 seconds.
6. Keep your mouth slightly open and cough twice.

Take a breath and repeat 2 to 4 times.

There are many things you can do to live better with COPD. What you do day by day can make a big difference in how you feel.



Tips to Remember to Take Your Medicine

Do you forget to take your medicines? You are not alone. Here are tips to help you remember to take your medicine.

Put your pills where you will see them. For example, if you take a pill with breakfast, put your pills on the breakfast table.

Put a reminder note where you will see it. For example, put a note on your coffee cup or the bathroom mirror if you take the medicine in the morning.

Get a pill box. They come in many sizes and shapes. Your pharmacist can help you choose one.

Set an alarm. Use an alarm clock or set the alarm on your phone, watch or computer.

Ask for help. Ask family or friends to remind you, especially when you first start taking the medicine.

Mark your medicine bottles with different colors. For example, blue for morning, green for midday and red for evening.



Make sure to keep a list of all your current medicines. Keep this list with you at all times in case of an emergency. At least once a year, be sure to review all your medicines with your doctor. This helps make sure that you:

- Take the medicines you need.
- Stop taking the ones you no longer need.
- Are taking medicines that are safe to take together.
- Keep the list updated.

Medicines are an important part of your treatment plan. Not taking them can affect how well your condition is managed.



Travel and Asthma

With a little extra planning, you can safely manage your asthma while traveling. Here are some ideas to keep in mind.

Before you go

See your doctor for a check-up. Make sure that your asthma is under good control. Have your doctor write you a prescription in case you need it while away.

Packing

Pack more medicine than you think you will need. If you are going by plane, make sure to keep your medicine and supplies in your carry-on luggage. Take your peak flow meter and asthma action plan. Have your doctor's phone number handy. Bring your long-term and quick-relief medicine.

Your destination

Think about where you are going and what triggers your asthma. Climate can make a difference. Warm, humid places may mean more exposure to dust mites, mold and some pollen types. Cold, damp climates may mean more dust mites and indoor mold. Cold air in a dry climate may also affect your asthma. High altitude can also be a concern. In this case, monitor your breathing during physical activity.

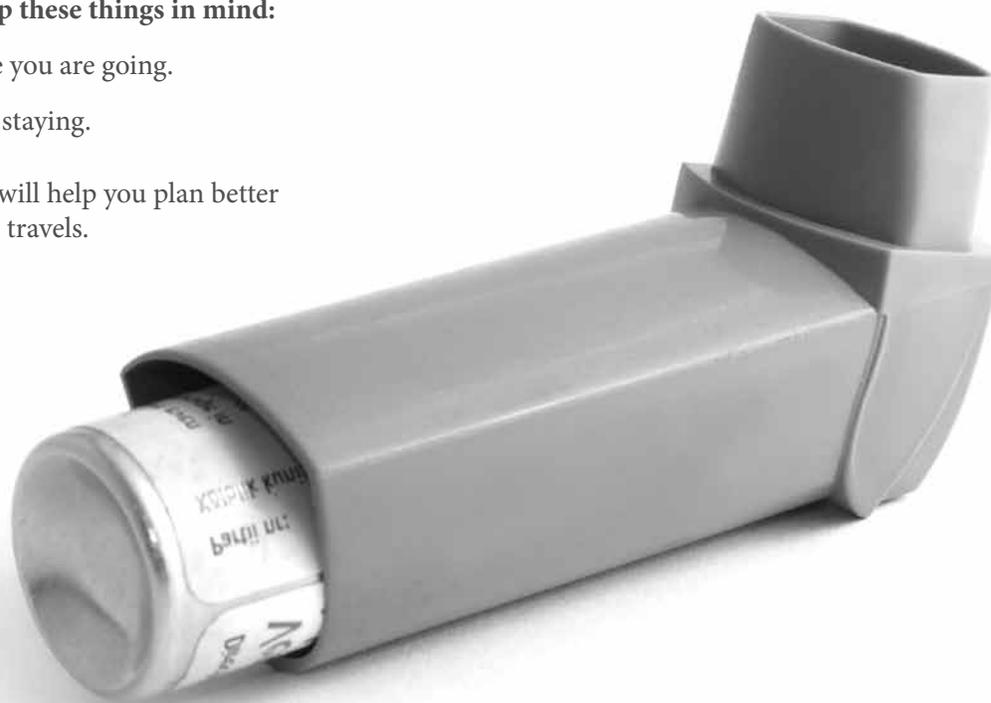
Other tips

- You might think about taking your own allergy proof bedding if dust mites are a problem.
- If you are going by car and you are allergic to pollen and mold, keep the windows closed and the air conditioner on.
- Tell your travel partner about your asthma and how to help you if you need it.

When planning a trip keep these things in mind:

- Think about where you are going.
- Where you will be staying.

What you will be doing. It will help you plan better and make the most of your travels.





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