

QUICK RELIEF AND CONTROLLER MEDICATIONS

When your doctor gives you an asthma medicine, he or she will tell you whether this medicine is a “controller” or a “quick-relief” medicine.

A Controller Medication

- A **controller medication** is used every day to decrease the inflammation (swelling) that occurs in the airways of patients with asthma.
- If taken regularly, controller medications can prevent asthma episodes from occurring, or make symptoms less severe when they do occur.
- Some controller medicines are inhaled, and others may be taken by mouth.
- Controller medications will not help you feel better right away when you do have an attack. That is why it is always important to have the quick-relief medication available.
- You should continue to take your controller medication(s) even if you feel fine. Studies have shown that it is better to take controller medicines every day than to have frequent attacks requiring quick-relief medicines.
- You cannot become addicted to the controller medicine, and long-term use does not weaken your lungs.
- If you go a long time on your controller medication without having any asthma attacks, you can talk with your doctor about decreasing or stopping your controller medications. Never make any changes to your controller medications without first talking to your doctor.



A Quick-relief Medication

- Helps to decrease or stop asthma symptoms once they have already started.
- Usually has an effect within 15 minutes.
- Works by relaxing the muscles that surround the airways. Those muscles can tighten around the airway during an asthma episode, and make the airway narrower.
- Use your quick relief medicine when you have symptoms such as
 - Chest tightness
 - Coughing
 - Wheezing
 - Shortness of breath
- If these symptoms do not get better with your quick-relief medication, or if you are in need of your quick-relief medication more often than every 4 hours, contact your doctor immediately.
- Your asthma may not be under good control if:
 - you are using your quick-relief medications more than 2 times per week;
 - you visit the emergency department for an asthma attack;
 - you are hospitalized for an asthma attack.

If any of these happen, see your doctor about changing or adding a controller medication for your asthma.

