

FAQs: My inhalers



Preventer or reliever?

Your preventer inhaler is the inhaler you take every day as prescribed; with well controlled asthma it prevents your asthma symptoms. Your reliever inhaler is to be used to treat, or relieve, symptoms of asthma only when they occur.

What does my preventer inhaler do?

Your preventer inhaler is an inhaled steroid medication that works within the lungs, the steroid helps to calm and prevent inflammation within the airways. Taking these inhaled steroids regularly means that you are less likely to react to your asthma triggers i.e. pollen or pollution when exposed.

Do I have to take my preventer inhaler every day?

The preventer inhaler builds up a protective effect in your lungs over time. Taking your preventer as prescribed will keep you symptom free for longer. It is key to remember if you are taking your preventer and feeling well, the preventer inhaler is doing its job. If you remain well we may trial a reduction in the dose of your steroid.

What are the side effects of taking my preventer inhaler?

It is unlikely that a correctly taken preventer inhaler will cause side effects as the medication goes straight into the lungs. Using correct inhaler technique will not only increase the effects of the inhaler but will also reduce risks of side effects. The higher the dose of steroid the more closely you will need to be monitored for potential side effects.

Side effects can be reduced by using a spacer and rinsing your mouth out after use. Some of the side effects that can occur are:

- A sore tongue
- A sore throat
- Hoarseness of the voice
- Oral thrush

With children taking a regular steroid there is a very small chance of affecting their adult growth. Asthma UK details this as: a child on a high dose steroid inhaler for 3 years may reduce their adult height by 1.2cm, this is less than an average grape. A small price to pay for a life saving medication.

Do I have to use a spacer?

If you are prescribed a metered dose inhaler (one you have to pump) then it should be used with a spacer. Spacers slow the speed of the medicine as it comes out of the inhaler allowing you to breathe slowly and deeply, ensuring that the correct amount of medication reaches the intended destination, your lungs. By using a spacer correctly it increases the effects of the medicine as it is no longer hitting the back of your throat and in turn reduces the likelihood of side effects.

How do I use my inhalers and spacer?

Follow this link: <https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhalers-medicines-treatments/using-inhalers/>

To see instructional videos for how to use your prescribed inhalers and spacer

Are inhaled steroids safe to use long term?

Steroids used to treat asthma are corticosteroids which are a copy of the substances the body makes naturally. They are not the same as the steroids used by bodybuilders. Steroid Inhalers are an effective treatment for asthma and are only prescribed if the benefits outweigh the risks in the management of your asthma.

Why should I not be using my blue inhaler more than 3 times per week?

Your blue inhaler (reliever) is there to treat symptoms of your asthma that occur there and then, the medicine salbutamol relaxes your airways providing relief of your symptoms. Using your blue inhaler more than 3 times per week shows us that your asthma is not under control. Becoming reliant on your reliever for symptom control rather than your preventer for symptom management is dangerous. This can lead to false reassurance, severe asthma attacks that require hospital admission and in the worst cases 3 people die per day in the UK due to an Asthma attack.

When do I need an Asthma review?

If your Asthma is well controlled then an asthma review annually is sufficient. You should book to have an additional review of asthma if:

- You are using your reliever more than 3 times per week
- Your asthma symptoms are getting worse
- You've had an asthma attack and had to go to hospital

Complete the Asthma UK, Asthma Risk checker to evaluate your risk of having an asthma attack.

<https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/manage-your-asthma/risk/>

This information was adapted from Asthma UK, For further information visit <https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/>