Asthma is a common condition. It can be easily controlled with modern treatments. However, in order to look after your asthma properly you need to know a little about your medicines, and you need to know the signs that might suggest your asthma is worsening.

Your name

Family doctor

Doctor’s telephone
Preventer inhalers
(usually brown, red or orange)

These are the most important medicines. They help prevent the symptoms of asthma from appearing – coughing, wheezing, tight chest and shortness of breath. Preventers will not work unless they are taken every day, as advised by your doctor or nurse.

Your preventer is

which you should take in a daily dose of

with a (specific device)
Reliever inhalers
(usually blue)

These rescue you from asthma symptoms as they happen. You should take your reliever, as advised by your doctor or nurse.

Your reliever is

which you should take with a (specific device)

Other treatments are


What is asthma?

People with asthma have airways which are almost always inflamed. This makes them more sensitive than normal. Unless this inflammation is minimised with regular anti-inflammatory preventer treatments, triggers such as colds, smoke, pets and dusty environments can act on your airways and cause the symptoms of asthma – coughing, wheezing, breathlessness and a tight chest. Your airways can be inflamed even when you feel well and have no symptoms.

Asthma triggers

An asthma trigger is anything that causes asthma symptoms to appear. Common triggers include viral infections such as flu or colds, house-dust mites, cigarette smoke and animals. Triggers vary from person to person. Most people will have several. It is important that you know what your individual trigger factors are and, where possible, that you try to avoid them.
Taking your preventer regularly

- reduces symptoms and the need for reliever medication.
- reduces the risk of asthma attacks

and, in the doses usually prescribed, is extremely safe.

If you know that colds often make your asthma worse, it may be sensible to double the dose of your preventer, and continue at that higher dose for a week. Your doctor or nurse will advise you.

Using your reliever

Relievers only rescue you from breathing difficulties as they happen. They do nothing to help reduce the underlying inflammation of the airways.
Signs that your asthma is worsening include:

- needing to use your reliever more often than usual
- waking at night with coughing, wheezing, tight chest or shortness of breath
- finding that your reliever doesn’t get rid of your symptoms as effectively, or for as long as usual.

If any of these happen, you should seek advice from your doctor or nurse as soon as possible. If you are very breathless and your reliever is not working, you must urgently contact your doctor, who may wish to review your medication.
Where to go for further information about asthma

The National Asthma Campaign is the independent UK charity working to conquer asthma, in partnership with people with asthma and all who share their concern, through a combination of research, education and support.

National Asthma Campaign
Head Office
Providence House
Providence Place
London N1 0NT

24 hour Information line
0171 971 0444

Registered charity number 802364

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