



Allergy, Asthma & Sinus Center

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Asthma Rescue Medications

These medications work for asthma by dilating or relaxing the airways. They are inhaled into the lungs by activating the inhaler. The proper inhalation technique can be demonstrated in our office. They should be considered only as "rescue" medication and never as long-term asthma control medications. These medications should "work" in 15 to 20 minutes. The beneficial effect should last 4 to 6 hours. Patients must take caution not to 'over rely' on these medications.

**** If shortness of breath, wheezing or chest tightness returns in a time less than 4 hours, the asthma is getting worse and it is time to seek help by calling the office or going to the Emergency Room if the office is closed****

Side effects of these medications include nervousness, headache, tremor of the hands, rapid heartbeat with palpitations, nausea and vomiting.

These inhalers are often the first medicine used for asthma. If you anticipate exposure to cold air, dogs or cats, or intend to exercise, use this inhaler 30 minutes beforehand. It can be used regularly up to 4 to 6 times daily when someone is experiencing difficulty with asthma.

The latest national guidelines recommend the use of this "rescue" medication once a week or less in well-treated asthma. If there is a need for the "rescue" medication more frequently than once or twice a week, it is time to get in touch with the doctor.

There is little advantage to using oral forms of this medication, as there tends to be more side effects. The one benefit of oral over inhaled forms is in the case of young children who are unable to coordinate the inhaler.

Common names of asthma rescue inhalers: Proventil, Ventolin, ProAir & Xopenex