



Visit your doctor to talk about your health and the medicines you may need. This factsheet will give you information about a type of medicine. You will learn what questions you should ask your doctor about this medicine. Don't be afraid to ask questions. It is very important for your health.

## Controlling Your Symptoms of Asthma

Asthma is a disease that affects the tubes in your lungs that carry air (oxygen). These tubes are called **airways**.

In people with asthma, the airways can be sensitive to pollen, dust mites, animal dander, chemicals, tobacco smoke, wood smoke, or even cold air. When someone with asthma is exposed to any of these things, the airways begin to swell up and they begin to make more mucus. Then the muscles around the airways get tight. This makes it harder for air to move in and out of the lungs. The person will start to cough, wheeze, and feel tightness in their chest.

Some of the things that can make asthma symptoms become worse are intense exercise, having a respiratory illness like the flu, and feeling stressed.

This factsheet will provide you with important information on the types of medicine used to treat asthma. If you or someone you know has asthma, keep reading to learn more.



## What can I do to prevent symptoms?

There are many things you can do to help prevent or reduce symptoms.



Stop smoking



Avoid pets, carpet, and dust



Wear a scarf over your mouth and nose when it is cold



Exercise to make your lungs stronger, but don't work too hard



Pay attention to see what makes your symptoms worse and try to stay away from those things



Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier to lower humidity in your house



Get an influenza (flu) shot every year and make sure you are up to date on your pneumonia shot



Herbal treatments usually do not work well to relieve the symptoms of asthma. Some of the herbal treatments can be dangerous, like one called herbal ephedra. Talk to your doctor before using any herbal treatments.



## What are inhaled steroids?

**Inhaled steroids** are a type of medicine doctors use to treat asthma. This type of medicine will help your airways by making less mucus and reducing the swelling. When a person with asthma takes this medicine they will be able to breathe easier, and it can help prevent an asthma attack.



Inhaled steroids can be taken in two ways:

- Using a **hand-held inhaler** with liquid or powder medicine. The hand-held inhalers work by putting it in your mouth and breathing in the medicine.
- Using a **nebulizer** with a liquid medicine. A nebulizer is a machine that makes steam that you breathe in through a mask.

Some people prefer one type more than another. You and your doctor can decide which is best for you.

Make sure you ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist how to use the hand-held inhaler or nebulizer the right way. If you use them the wrong way, the medicine may not work as well or you may need more of the medicine to control your symptoms.



## Do inhaled steroids have side effects?

Yes. Some of the common side effects are:

- Irritation in the mouth and throat
- Cough
- Hoarse voice



They can also cause infections in the mouth or throat but that is not very common.

To avoid other side effects, make sure you give your doctor a list of all the medicines you are taking for other health conditions. You should not mix other medicines with inhaled steroids because they may cause you to have other health problems.



**Note for Pregnant Women:** If you are pregnant and have asthma, it is important you continue to use your inhaled steroid during your pregnancy. By doing this, you will make sure you and your baby are getting all the oxygen you need in your blood.



*Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* evaluated different types of inhaled steroids by comparing how well they work, how safe they are, their side effects, and their cost. *Consumer Reports* recommends these inhaled steroids as the best choice for most people:

Name	Who it is for
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>QVAR</b> (brand name, not available as generic)</li> </ul>	Adults and children over age 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Budesonide suspension nebulizer</b> (generic)</li> </ul>	Children ages 1 and older



In the United States, “generic” medicines are just as good as brand-name medicines. They are very safe and work just like the brand-name medicine, and they cost a lot less money. Ask your doctor if you can get a generic medicine instead of a brand-name medicine.

The medicines listed above cost less than other inhaled steroids and are as effective and as safe as the others. Talk to your doctor about the most affordable option for you.

Some people respond better to one inhaled steroid than to another. Your doctor can help you decide which medicine is the right one for you.

### To learn more about this topic go to:

<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/2013/11/treating-asthma-with-inhaled-steroids/index.htm>



### How to Get the Best Price for Your Medicines

- **Ask for a generic:** Tell your pharmacist you want a generic medicine instead of the brand-name. You will pay less for a generic. Not all brand-name medicines have a generic, but many do.
- **Compare prices:** Call or visit three different pharmacies. Give them the name of the medicine and ask how much it costs. Ask if they have a drug discount program that can help you pay less for your medicine. Buy your medicine from the pharmacy that gives you the cheapest price.
- **Sign up for patient assistance programs:** Most companies that make medicines have programs that help people that don’t have a lot of money and do not have insurance to get brand-name medicines for free or at a low cost. The Partnership for Prescription Assistance can help you find a program: [www.pparx.org](http://www.pparx.org) or 1-888-477-2669.

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