

Long-acting Bronchodilators: Salmeterol, Formoterol, and Arformoterol

What are they?

Long-acting bronchodilators are medicines that relax and open your airways. When used every day, long-acting bronchodilators will help prevent asthma symptoms. They can work to prevent symptoms for up to 12 hours.

Long-acting bronchodilators include:

- Salmeterol, which usually takes at least 30 minutes to start working and is available as an inhaler.
- Formoterol, which takes at least 5 minutes to start working and is available as an inhaler.
- Arformoterol, which is available as a nebulized solution.

How are they used?

- Twice a day.
- Usually started when your symptoms are more frequent (every day or every night).
- Used to lessen or prevent the symptoms of asthma (they are not anti-inflammatory medicine so will not reduce inflammation in your airways).
- You may be given an anti-inflammatory inhaler along with a long-acting bronchodilator; this is done to prevent asthma symptoms.
- Long-acting bronchodilators are similar to albuterol but they work in a different way to reduce asthma symptoms.
 - Long-acting bronchodilators take longer than albuterol to start working and last longer.
 - If you need albuterol several times a day to stop asthma symptoms, then regular use of a long-acting bronchodilator may help.
 - The use of a long-acting bronchodilator may replace regular use of albuterol.
 - **Never use long-acting bronchodilators to stop a sudden asthma attack.** Keep your albuterol inhaler with you to stop acute asthma attacks.
 - Never use more medicine than your doctor prescribes.

Side effects

- Are more common with higher doses.
- Common side effects:
 - Fast heart beat, tremors, feeling anxious or restless, upset stomach and insomnia (trouble falling asleep).
- Serious side effects are rare, but call your doctor if you have:
 - Chest pain, a very fast or unusual heart beat, severe headache, or severe restlessness.

You should call your doctor or go to the emergency room if your asthma symptoms keep getting worse even though you are using your long-acting bronchodilator.

Special instructions

Long-acting bronchodilators are preventer medicines. You may still need to use your albuterol to stop acute asthma attacks. If you are using albuterol frequently every day in addition to using a long-acting bronchodilator, talk to your doctor. This may be a sign that your asthma is still not well-controlled.

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