

# Inhaled Steroids

## What is it?

- Inhaled steroids are anti-inflammatory medicines that help prevent asthma symptoms. They help because they reduce inflammation (swelling) and inflammation is a main cause of asthma symptoms.
- Inhaled steroids will not stop an acute asthma attack – you should use your quick-relief bronchodilator.
- Inhaled steroids are not the same type of steroids used by some athletes to make their muscles bigger. Inhaled steroids do not hurt the body like anabolic steroids, the steroids used by some athletes to make muscles bigger.

## How should it be used?

- Usually a person will start regularly using inhaled steroids when their asthma symptoms become more common or worse.
- Inhaled steroids must be used every day.
- You should always use a spacer device with your inhaled steroid unless it is not required. (Advair Diskus , Pulmicort flexhaler and Respules , Asmanex Twisthaler® do not require a spacer).
- Inhaled steroids can start working in 24 hours. But you might not notice a change for 1 or 2 weeks. Even if you do not have any asthma symptoms you should use your inhaled steroid every day.

## Side effects

- Inhaled steroids can make your voice hoarse or your throat irritated and cause coughing.
- Sometimes, inhaled steroids cause a yeast infection in your mouth or throat. This infection will look like white curd-like patches in your mouth or throat and can be sore or painful. If you notice this, call your doctor.
- You can reduce the risk of getting these side effects by always using a spacer device with your inhaled steroid and rinsing your mouth with water (be sure to spit out the water after you are done rinsing your mouth).

## Special instructions

Sometimes your doctor will have you take an oral steroid. Oral steroids are usually used for a short time (1 to 2 weeks) to stop acute asthma attacks. If you have been taking an oral steroid and are starting to take an inhaled steroid, you should call your doctor if your asthma symptoms get worse or if you have any bad nausea, weakness, headache, drowsiness, muscle pain, or dizziness.

You can tell how long your inhaler will last by dividing the total number of puffs in the inhaler (written on the canister) by how many puffs you use each day. Most steroid inhalers will last 15 to 30 days. Be sure to get your refills before your inhaler is empty.

