



... Inhaled Corticosteroids (ICS)

Inhaled corticosteroids, commonly referred to as inhaled “steroids”, are used for long-term control of asthma symptoms. They work to help fight inflammation through reducing the swelling and irritation in the walls of the airways of the lungs, which helps prevent your child from having an asthma attack. They are sometimes referred to as a “preventer” or “controller” medication.

Examples

- Beclomethasone (QVAR®)
- Budesonide (Pulmicort®)
- Ciclesonide (Alvesco®)
- Fluticasone (Flovent®)
- Mometasone (Asmanex®)

Special instructions

- Inhaled corticosteroids are used to prevent an asthma attack. It is important that your child takes it **every day** as prescribed even when he or she is not having symptoms and looks well.
- Do not stop using unless told to do so by your child’s health care provider.
- Inhaled corticosteroids will not stop your child’s asthma attack. If your child is having an asthma attack, you should give a “reliever” medication (eg. salbutamol or terbutaline).
- Rinse mouth out with water and spit after each use. If your child is too young to spit, simply have him or her take a drink of water. If your child uses a spacer with mask, gently wipe your child’s face with a wet washcloth after each use.
- It may take a few weeks for this medicine to work.

Using your Inhaler correctly

- Using this medicine the correct way is very important. Ask your child’s health care provider, pharmacist, or certified asthma educator if you have any questions about how to use the inhaler.

Learn more about using your inhaler at www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/clinics/asthma

▶ Metered-dose inhaler (MDI)

- Shake the MDI inhaler well before use.
- Your child should use a spacer with the MDI inhaler. Using a spacer with a MDI inhaler is very important to help get the medicine into the lungs and work better.

▶ Dry-powder inhaler (Turbuhaler®, Diskus®, or Twisthaler®)

- Do not shake the dry-powder inhaler before use.
- Do not breathe out (exhale) into the inhaler.

Dose counting

It is important that you keep track of how many doses of your child’s medication are remaining and obtain a new prescription before it runs out. Inhaled corticosteroids may or may not have a dose counter, depending on the brand. If the inhaled corticosteroid does not have a dose counter, it is important that you keep track of how many doses have been used on a calendar or by another other convenient method. Obtain a new inhaler when there are approximately 5 days of medicine remaining. The inhaler may still make a sound or have something coming out when you shake it even if it is empty because there will be propellant or powder left.



What are?

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Tips for parents

If you miss a dose or forget to give this medicine, give it as soon as you remember unless it is almost time for the next dose, then skip the missed dose.

Do not give extra medication to make up for the missed dose. **If you are unsure what to do about a missed dose, contact your health care provider or pharmacist.**

Common side effects

Call your child's health care provider if the following effects are bothersome:

- Hoarseness, sore throat or tongue
- Yeast infections in the mouth (white spots), known as thrush
- Skin irritation from the face mask
- Bad taste

Warning signs

- Call your child's health care provider immediately if your child:
- Does not respond to his/her asthma "reliever" or "rescue" medication (eg. salbutamol or terbutaline).
- Seems to require more frequent use of asthma "reliever" or "rescue" medication.
- Develops worsening symptoms of asthma such as more coughing, attacks of wheezing, chest tightness or shortness of breath and if symptoms are waking your child up at night

References from:

- The Children's Asthma Education Centre: www.asthma-education.com
- Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center: www.cincinnatichildrens.org
- The Asthma Society of Canada: www.asthma.ca
- Canadian Lung Association: www.lung.ca

Rare but serious side effects

Very rarely the body may under-produce its own version of steroid hormones (typically happens with high doses of medicine)

Signs or symptoms to look out for include:

- Muscle weakness
- Tiredness / fatigue
- Nausea
- Belly pain
- Vomiting / diarrhea
- Joint pain
- Poor weight gain
- Poor growth

If you notice your child developing any of these signs discuss with your asthma doctor.

Contacts

- For additional information on this or any Health Topic, please contact the Family Support and Resource Centre (www.bcchildrens.ca/fri), or your pediatrician.

Developed by the Department of Pharmacy and the Asthma Education Clinic with assistance from the Department of Learning & Development