

Frequently Asked Questions About Asthma

Q. What is asthma?

A. Asthma is a chronic lung disease with two main components: **inflammation** (swelling and excess mucus build-up in the airways) and **airway constriction** (tightening of the muscles surrounding the airways). Treating both components of the disease is necessary for many patients to achieve optimal asthma control and help prevent symptoms.

Q. What causes asthma?

A. While the exact cause of asthma is not known, researchers continue to explore a combination of factors (both genetic and environmental) that may cause asthma. These include:

- An inherited tendency to develop allergies
- Parents who have asthma
- Certain respiratory infections during childhood
- Contact with some airborne allergens or exposure to some viral infections in infancy or in early childhood when the immune system is developing

Different factors may be more likely to cause asthma in some people than in others. Researchers continue to explore what causes asthma.

Q. Who is at risk for asthma?

A. While asthma affects people of all ages, it most often begins in childhood. More than 22 million people in the United States have asthma, more than 6 million of whom are children.

Q. What are the consequences of uncontrolled asthma?

A. Asthma is a serious disease. Uncontrolled asthma can put patients at risk for increased symptoms, missed school or work, emergency department visits, hospitalization and even death.

Q. What are common asthma symptoms?

A. Asthma symptoms include shortness of breath, wheezing, chest tightness, and cough. Other signs of asthma can include a persistent cough at night; difficulty breathing during, or soon after, physical exertion or exercise; or waking up at night because of one or more of these symptoms.

Q. How do Inhaled Corticosteroids work?

A. Inhaled corticosteroids or ICS help reduce inflammation, or swelling inside the airways, one of the two main components of asthma. ICS deliver medicine directly to the lungs. They can therefore be used in much lower doses – with less chance for unwanted side effects – than oral corticosteroids.

Q. How is an ICS used in the treatment of asthma?

A. Use of ICS is supported by the 2007 National Institutes of Health (NIH) Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma. Those guidelines recommend the use of an ICS as the preferred therapy for patients 4 years of age and older with persistent asthma. For those whose disease is not controlled on an ICS alone, the guidelines recommend that additional therapies be added to the ICS.

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Q. What is a Long-Acting Beta-Agonist (LABA)?

A. LABAs are designed to treat airway constriction, one of the two main components of asthma. LABAs work by causing muscles in the lungs to relax, thereby allowing better air flow. For the treatment of asthma, LABAs should be used in combination with an ICS. LABAs are also approved to treat COPD.

Q. How is a LABA used in the treatment of asthma?

A. The labeling for all LABAs explicitly calls for use only in combination with another controller, such as an ICS. Furthermore, the NIH Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma are also clear that LABAs should never be used alone and recommend they be added to an ICS as a preferred therapy for patients who are not well-controlled on ICS alone.

Q. How does Advair® work?

A. Advair is a combination medicine that contains both an ICS, fluticasone propionate, to reduce inflammation and an inhaled LABA, salmeterol, to help prevent airway constriction.

Q. What is the role of combination therapy in asthma treatment guidelines?

A. The National Institutes of Health Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma recommend the use of an ICS/LABA combination as a preferred therapy for patients five years of age and older who are not controlled on ICS alone or as initial therapy in patients 12 years of age and older with moderate-to-severe persistent asthma.

The NIH also recommends the ongoing assessment of asthma control with validated questionnaires, such as the Asthma Control Test™ and the Childhood Asthma Control Test. The Asthma Control Test is for people 12 years of age and older; the Childhood Asthma Control Test is for children 4-11 years of age.

The Asthma Control Test is a trademark of QualityMetric Inc.

For full prescribing information and medication guide for Advair visit www.gsk.com

This information is provided by GlaxoSmithKline, a research-based company and a world leader in respiratory care.