

Medication

Medication generally prescribed for asthma treatment falls into either of two main categories.

Bronchodilators

• short-term action bronchodilators

- are emergency or relief medication
- are used as needed, as little as possible, in crisis situations
- are not a base treatment
- work by relaxing bronchial muscles without relieving inflammation
- work in 1–10 minutes and last for 4–6 hours
- are delivered through a blue inhaler or pump
- include the following brands:
Ventolin[®], Bricanyl[®], Berotec[®], Airomir™

• long-term action bronchodilators

- relieve and prevent symptoms often caused by various irritants (cold, exertion, smoke, etc.)
- work in 20–30 minutes and last around 12 hours
- are not effective in a crisis and do not replace other medications
- include the following brands:
Serevent Diskus[®], Oxeze[®] and Foradil[®]
- are used as prescribed by a doctor, usually morning and night

Bronchial anti-inflammatories

- reduce inflammation and secretions
- include inhaled corticosteroids (aerosol corticosteroids), which are among the most powerful medicines for asthma
- are a base treatment for asthma
- are maintenance medications
- are used regularly (usually twice a day)
- act slowly and progressively
- can be delivered via a yellow, brown, red or orange inhaler or pump
- include the following brands:
Flovent[®], Pulmicort[®] and QVAR[®]

There are also other medications, including various combinations of bronchodilators and anti-inflammatories.

Even if you feel better, you must keep taking your medication as prescribed.

A second wind

Asthmatics have to play a key role in the treatment of their disease. They must know, understand, and recognize their symptoms and be aware of the effect of asthma medications. They must remember that they can control the disease and lead an active life.



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Asthma



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What is asthma?

Asthma is a respiratory disorder that affects 2.7 million Canadians, according to Health Canada. This disease is the result of inflammation of the bronchial tubes, which makes it more difficult for them to transport air to the lungs.

Asthma can strike at any age and does not always develop in the same way.

Signs and symptoms

Signs and symptoms of asthma differ from one sufferer to the next, and from day to day. You may experience one or several of the following symptoms:

- Wheezing
- Tightness of the chest
- Coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Secretions

Given that respiratory problems can be caused by a variety of medical problems, it is important to see a doctor if you have these symptoms. You can then get a precise diagnosis with clear instructions on what to do or what treatment to receive.

Causes and risk factors

- Are your parents **asthmatic or allergic** (hay fever, eczema, etc.)?
- Do you live in a polluted environment or an area with **poor quality air**?
- Do **your parents or grandparents smoke**, or did they ever? Do you live with smokers?
- At work, are you exposed to **irritant particulate matter** like animal fur, paint particles, etc.?

People who answer “yes” to one or more of these questions are at risk of developing or having asthma.

The causes of asthma have not been clearly established, but these questions let us identify some risk factors.

Note that asthma symptoms can be provoked or aggravated by **allergies** (dust, pollen, etc.), **viruses** (colds, flu, etc.) and **physical activity**.

Note: Most cases of asthma in children stem from allergies.

Treatment and taking control

Asthma can't be cured, but its symptoms can be greatly reduced.

What steps should you take to best manage your asthma?

- Identify factors that trigger or aggravate symptoms, and avoid them – animals, smoking, cold air, exercise, allergies, viruses, etc.
- Talk to your doctor about controlling your asthma symptoms.
- Rigorously follow the action plan you develop with your doctor.
- Follow drug prescriptions and medication instructions.

Uncontrolled asthma...

Asthma shouldn't prevent you from doing everything you normally do, including physical exercise. But asthmatics who don't stay in control of the disease risk not being able to continue regular activities, especially exercise, and frequent sleep interruptions due to asthma symptoms.

Control of your symptoms will be possible when you're receiving adequate medication.

