

Inhaled corticosteroids through metered dose inhalers (AeroBid, Azmacort, Beclovent, Flovent, Pulmicort, Vanceril)



What are inhaled corticosteroids?

Inhaled corticosteroids are medicines used to prevent asthma attacks.

- They work by reducing inflammation (swelling and mucus build-up) in your child's airways.
- They are not the same as steroids that some athletes use to build muscles.

Inhaled corticosteroids, known as controller medicines, are long-term control medicines. They are not rescue medicines. They will not help with breathing trouble or during an asthma attack.

How do I give inhaled corticosteroids?

- **It is important to give your child their inhaled corticosteroids every day, even if they do not have any asthma symptoms.** You must do this to prevent your child's asthma attacks.
 - Your child's doctor will tell you how much of this medicine to give and how often to give it each day.
 - If your child misses a dose of inhaled corticosteroids, give it as soon as you remember unless it is almost time for the next dose. Do not give 2 doses at the same time.
- Most often, this medicine works best when using a spacer, such as an AeroChamber, with the inhaler. (Note: Azmacort comes with its own spacer.) The spacer increases the amount of medicine that reaches your child's lungs and decreases the chance of side effects.
- If your child is also using a bronchodilator, such as albuterol, give the albuterol inhaler first. This will help the inhaled corticosteroids get deeper into the lungs and work better.

Not all inhalers are used with a spacer. Ask the doctor whether your child should use one. If your child does not need to use a spacer, follow these guidelines:

1. Wash your hands well with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
2. Shake the inhaler, and remove the plastic cap. (If it is a new inhaler or has not been used for several days, follow the manufacturer's instructions for how to prime the inhaler first.)
3. Have your child stand up and breathe out all the way.
4. Place the inhaler in your child's mouth, and have them close their lips.
5. Have your child breathe in **slowly and deeply**. At the same time, firmly press down on the inhaler to give 1 puff of medicine.
6. Have them hold their breath for about 5 to 10 seconds. **This is a very important step.** Then have them breathe out.
7. If the doctor prescribed more than 1 puff, wait at least 1 minute between puffs. Shake the MDI before each puff, and repeat steps 3 thru 6.
8. After using the inhaler, have your child rinse their mouth with water and spit it out. This is to decrease some side effects. (Make sure your child does not swallow the water.)

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Inhaled corticosteroids, continued

What foods or drugs should my child avoid?

- Check with your child's doctor or pharmacist before you give inhaled corticosteroids with other medicines. This includes over-the-counter medicines.
- You can safely give your child inhaled corticosteroids with any foods.
- Tell the doctor if your child is taking any vitamins, herbal products or other home or over-the-counter remedies.

What else do I need to know?

- Let the doctor know if your child:
 - Has had tuberculosis (TB) or any infection including an eye infection caused by the herpes virus.
 - Has been exposed to chickenpox or measles 3 weeks before starting or anytime while taking inhaled corticosteroids and has not received their vaccines.
- This medicine works slowly. It may take more than 2 weeks before it starts to help prevent your child's asthma attacks.
- Store the inhaler at room temperature and away from heat, direct light and moisture.
- Do not expose the metal canister to open fire or temperatures above 120°F.
- Do not poke holes in the canister.
- Clean the plastic case 1 time each week as directed by the manufacturer's instructions.

What if my child is pregnant or taking birth control?

Before giving this medicine, tell the doctor if your child:

- Is or may be pregnant or is breastfeeding.
- Is taking oral contraceptives (birth control pills). Inhaled corticosteroids may affect how birth control works. Talk with the doctor about your child using other forms of birth control while taking this medicine.

What are some possible side effects?

Your child may have 1 or more of these:

- Acne or skin blemishes
- Decreased sense of smell or taste
- Increased appetite
- Coughing just after using the inhaler. Tell your child's doctor if coughing continues.
- Sore throat, hoarse voice or dry mouth
- Mild weight gain
- Fluid retention

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Inhaled corticosteroids, continued

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department (ED) **right away** if your child shows signs of severe (very bad) allergic reaction, such as:

- Hives
- Swelling of the mouth, eyes or face
- Breathing problems
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Feels faint
- Or, if you have an urgent concern or emergency

When should I call the doctor?

Call the doctor **right away** if your child has any of these:

- Sores or white patches in their mouth or throat
- Rash with severe itching

When should I call 911?

Call 911 **right away** if your child:

- Is so tired and weak that they hardly respond to you.
- Is working **very** hard to breathe or finds it hard to take a breath.
- Grunts when they breathe.
- Has chest retractions (skin pulling in around the ribs and chest when breathing).
- Has a blue or dark purple color to the nails, lips or gums.
- Stops breathing for more than 10 seconds.
- Cannot talk while trying to breathe.
- Has any breathing problem that needs care **right away**.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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