

ANTILEUKOTRIENE DRUGS

By J. Allen Meadows

ANTILEUKOTRIENE DRUGS

MEDICATIONS: Montelukast (Singulair), Zafirlukast (Accolate)

ACTION: Reduces the swelling, inflammation and the mucus production in the airways, thus decreasing the symptoms of asthma and nasal allergies. Although they are only approved for use in asthma and allergic rhinitis, they have also been found helpful in other inflammatory conditions including atopic dermatitis, chronic urticaria, and chronic sinusitis. They are not bronchodilators and therefore do not provide immediate relief for an acute wheezing episode. In aspirin sensitive patients, regular use may decrease the risk from accidental aspirin ingestion.

Since antileukotrienes are preventative drugs, they must be taken regularly to be of optimal benefit. They may take several weeks to start working. If as few as 20% of the doses are missed these drugs may have no beneficial effect at all.

HOW TAKEN: Oral pill

DOSE: The dose is one or two times a day, depending on the drug. Do not stop taking the prescribed dose of this medication before checking with your physician.

SIDE EFFECTS: Rare, mild, and infrequent side effects including headache, stomachache, and diarrhea. Contrary to the FDA required warnings on TV commercials, these drugs may help relieve the inflammation associated with chronic ear infections, and are NOT believed to cause ear infections by independent experts.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: Accolate must be taken on an empty stomach, (one hour before or two hours after a meal.)