

## **INHALED STEROIDS**

By J. Allen Meadows, MD

### INHALED STEROIDS

**MEDICATIONS:** Fluticasone (Flovent®), Triamcinolone (Azmacort®), Beclamethasone (QVARTM, Beclovent®), Budesonide (Pulmicort®) Flunisolide (Aerobid®), Ciclesonide (AlvescoTM)

**ACTION:** Reduces the swelling, inflammation and the mucus production in the airways thus decreasing the symptoms of asthma. They can help decrease the "twitchiness" of the asthmatic lungs. It is not a bronchodilator and therefore does not provide immediate relief for an acute wheezing episode. Since inhaled steroids are preventative drugs, they must be taken regularly to be of optimal benefit. They take one month to begin working and 2-3 months to have a maximum effect.

**DOSE:** Individualized, commonly, 2-8 puffs are administered 2-4 times per day, although the entire days medication may be taken as a single dose. Do not stop taking the prescribed dose of this medication before checking with your physician.

**SIDE EFFECTS:** Few and infrequent side effects: Dizziness, especially when more than six puffs at a time are administered at a time; thrush, a fungus infection of the throat and mouth causing white patches in the mouth; sore throat, hoarseness, and dry mouth.

**SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:** You can decrease the risk of thrush by rinsing your mouth and spitting after each treatment, and by always using a spacer device with metered dose inhalers.

Three precautions must be followed to prevent side effects caused by Pulmicort Respules®. The patient must wear a mask to avoid direct nebulization of medicines to the eyes (A small amount of medicine coming out of the vents in the mask is not a concern). The patient should also wipe the face to prevent a facial rash, and rinse the mouth or drink to prevent thrush.