

## **ACTION PLAN FOR WORSENING ASTHMA**

By J. Allen Meadows, MD

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#### COUGH

- Your rescue inhaler (such as Albuterol or Maxair) is the primary medicine to use for any cough, even if the cough is due to a cold, allergy, bronchitis, or even due to popcorn being stuck in the throat.
- Patients with asthma should avoid cough syrup and cough drops, and choose to use their rescue inhaler instead if they are coughing unless a doctor specifically prescribes cough syrup to use in addition to your inhaler.
- If you have asthma and develop a cough, you should not assume it is due to a "normal cold." Take asthma medication!

#### RESCUE INHALER (Albuterol, Ventolin, Proventil, Pro Air, Maxair)

- There is no limit on how much you can use your rescue inhaler, such as Albuterol and Maxair.
- Overuse of your rescue inhaler will not hurt you, but if you need to use your rescue inhaler too often, your asthma may hurt you.
- Anyone who needs to use their rescue inhaler more than once or twice a week has poorly controlled symptoms.
- Anyone who needs a rescue inhaler more than once or twice a day is in urgent need of an oral steroid and should contact the doctor's office.
- If you call and report excessive use of your rescue inhaler (beyond once or twice a day for several days at a time), you will be asked to see your primary physician or an urgent care center, like Pri-Med.

#### ORAL STEROIDS (Prednisone, Orapred, Medrol)

- If you have oral steroids on hand, it is fine to take a dose without calling; however, if you have decided your asthma flare is severe enough to need an oral steroid, you must contact our office within 24 hours.
- When traveling out of town, it would be a good idea to have a supply of oral steroids on hand.
- Patients who use full courses of oral steroids without contacting our office will not be prescribed any more "extra" prednisone.
- If you call our office stating you have completed a course of oral steroids and are no better, without talking to our office since you initiated such a course, you will likely be directed to be seen at an urgent care center.

#### ACUTE ILLNESSES

- Ninety percent of asthma flares are treated over the phone. Treating your asthma flares over the phone is a special service we provide. However, to receive this special service, you must keep regularly scheduled appointments. If you have not been seen in the last 12 months we usually can't treat you on the phone.
- Our office is set up for preventive care, not sick visits. We do not routinely have

appointments for sick visits and we request you do not drop in without an appointment. In some cases, for a significant flare, you may be asked to see your primary care physician or an urgent care center, like Pri-Med.

- Federal law governs interactions between physicians and patients who drop in to a medical facility without an appointment. If you choose to drop in against our policy, the service you receive, that is dictated by federal law, will not be what you are accustomed to in our office. If you are too sick to wait an hour for a nurse to return your call, go to the closest emergency room. Dropping in to any physician's office when you are very ill is not recommended.

#### AFTER-HOURS CONTACT

- Dr. Meadows is almost always on call and can be reached at the office number, 334-272-6062. Even if you are a personal friend of the Meadows family, calling the home phone number will most often delay the doctor getting your message, since Dr. Meadows is frequently away from home. It is always best to call the office number if you need to speak to Dr. Meadows about a medical question.