



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.

Asthma and Home Steroid Use

Asthma is when the airways, or bronchi, in the lungs overreact to certain things. If your child has asthma, they are at risk for bronchospasms (**bron**-ko-spae-zim), also called “asthma attacks”. Asthma attacks can cause:

- Troubled or strange breathing
- Coughing and wheezing
- Inflammation or swelling
- Sucking in (retractions) of the chest or stomach; showing ribs
- Sweating
- Irritability
- Pale skin

The doctor or health care provider has ordered quick-relief, or “rescue,” medicines to use if your child has an asthma attack.

- Quick-relief medicines, like albuterol or Xopenex®, help relax the airway to stop an attack.
- Your child needs to use this medicine every 4 hours when having symptoms of an attack.

Steroids

Steroids, like prednisone and prednisolone (Orapred®), are medicines that decrease swelling of the airway. They are used when quick-relief medicines can't stop the asthma attack.

- The doctor has ordered steroids for your child. Oral steroids can be pills or in liquid form. The doctor will order liquid if your child can't swallow pills.
- Keep steroids close by and easy to find. Use it when quick-relief medicines don't help the symptoms of an asthma attack.
- Oral steroids are often ordered for 5 days at a time. The doctor may order more or less of them based on your child's history.

What To Do

1. Start the quick-relief medicine if your child shows signs of an attack, like coughing, wheezing, or trouble breathing. This means they are in the Yellow Zone on the Asthma Action Plan (AAP).
2. If your child is still showing signs of an attack before it's time for the next dose of quick-relief medicine, they are in the Orange Zone on the AAP. Start the steroid medicine.
3. Let your child's doctor's office know when they started the steroid medicine. Call the doctor's office any time you have questions about your child's asthma or asthma medicines, even if it is after hours.
4. Your child must finish all of the medicine exactly as it was ordered after they start the steroids.

Important Things to Remember

- Give medicine exactly as prescribed by the doctor and pharmacist.
- Watch for side effects. Most of them will go away when the medicine is stopped.
- If your child gets a skin rash, stop the medicine and call the doctor.
- Get refills on all medicines before they are gone.
- Call the doctor if your child takes too much medicine or if someone else takes it.

When to Get Emergency Help

Call 911 or go to the Emergency Department if your child has:

- Severe coughing or trouble breathing after taking the quick-relief medicine and steroids.
- Swelling of the hands, feet, or ankles.