

acceptance: agreement by patient to a treatment routine they understand
Accolate: brand name for zafirlukast, a leukotriene modifier (oral)
acute: sudden
adrenal insufficiency: inability of the body's adrenal glands to produce an adequate amount of cortisol, the hormone needed to respond to stress
adrenaline (epinephrine): a quick relief medicine, produced by the body and available in synthetic form
adrenergic: adrenaline-like medicine
adverse: undesirable
Aerobid: brand name for flunisolide, an inhaled steroid medicine, controller
AeroChamber: brand of holding chamber
Air Watch: airflow monitoring device with electronic link to the doctor
airflow: the rate at which you can blow air out of your lungs
albuterol: generic name of Proventil, Ventolin and ProAir; beta₂-agonists, quick relief medicines
allergen: any substance that can induce an allergy
allergist: doctor who specializes in understanding and treating allergies
allergy: condition in which the body has an immune reaction to a substance that is normally harmless
alveoli: air sacs located at the end of the tiniest airways
ampule (ampoule): small, sealed vial containing medicine in liquid form
anaphylaxis: severe allergic reaction throughout the body which can be fatal if not treated immediately; commonly includes respiratory symptoms, itching, hives, and fainting
antibody: protein that develops in the body in response to a foreign substance (antigen)
anticholinergic: type of inhaled quick relief medicine that acts through a different mechanism than beta₂-agonists
antihistamine: generic name for medicine that blocks the actions of histamine, such as swelling and itching
antiinflammatory: medicine that counteracts inflammation
asthma: inflammatory disease of the airways characterized by airways that are hyperresponsive and symptoms that can be reversed
Asthma Peak Flow Diary: an individual record of peak flow scores, medicines, asthma signs, and triggers; helps in monitoring peak flow trends in people 5 years and older
asthma signs: physical indicators of asthma that can be observed by another person
Asthma Signs Diary: an individual record of asthma signs scores, medicines, and triggers that helps in monitoring the trends in asthma signs in children under 5 years of age
asthma treatment zone: a range of peak flow scores or total scores of asthma signs that calls for following a particular treatment plan
asymptomatic: without symptoms
atopic: allergic
Atrovent: brand name for ipratropium bromide, an inhaled quick relief medicine
attack: a dramatic term for an episode of asthma
Azmacort: brand name for triamcinolone, an inhaled steroid medicine, controller

beclomethasone: generic name for Vanceril, Beclovent, and QVAR, inhaled steroid medicines, controller
Beclovent: brand name for beclomethasone, an inhaled steroid medicine, controller

beta-blockers: medicines that block the action of beta-agonist medicines, and responses of the sympathetic nervous system

beta₂-agonist: a class of quick relief medicine

b.i.d.: a dosing schedule calling for medicine to be taken twice a day

blood concentration: amount of a substance in a given quantity of blood expressed as weight per unit volume (e.g., mg/ml)

blow-by technique: a low-efficiency method for administering inhaled medicines

breath-activated: method for triggering the release of medicine from a device by inhalation

breathing cycle: total time it takes to breathe in and out once

breathing rate: number of breaths per minute

Brethaire: brand name for terbutaline, an inhaled beta₂-agonist, quick relief medicine

Brethine: a brand name for terbutaline, an inhaled beta₂-agonist, quick relief medicine

Bricanyl: a brand name for terbutaline, an inhaled beta₂-agonist, quick relief medicine

bronchi: large air passages or airways

bronchiolitis: inflammation of the smallest airways (bronchioles); caused by a virus

bronchitis: inflammation of the large airways (bronchi) due to asthma, a virus or pollutant

bronchoconstriction: narrowing of the airways caused by contraction of the smooth muscles encircling them (same as bronchospasm)

bronchodilator: medicine that causes the airways to open

bronchospasm: narrowing of the airways caused by contraction of the smooth muscles encircling them (same as bronchoconstriction)

budesonide: generic name for Pulmicort, an inhaled steroid medicine, controller

candidiasis: yeast infection in the mouth or vagina; same as moniliasis

capillary: tiniest blood vessel

cartilage: strong, flexible tissue that supports the large airways

cc: abbreviation for cubic centimeter; equivalent to a milliliter (ml) or 1/1000 of a liter. This metric measurement is equal to 1/5 of a measuring teaspoon.

CDN: compressor driven nebulizer

CFC: chlorofluorocarbon; propellant used in most metered dose inhalers

chemical mediator: class of chemical that plays a role in the asthma reaction; includes histamine and leukotrienes

chronic: continuous or long-term

cilia: tiny hairlike projections from the surface of the cells that line the airway

closed mouth technique: a method for inhaling medicine from an MDI; open-mouth technique is preferred

compliance: doing exactly what the doctor says, whether or not you understand it

compressor: machine that produces air under pressure

compressor driven nebulizer (CDN): electric- or battery-powered device that uses compressed air to create a medicine mist

consultation: full review of a patient's asthma history, physical exam, and other information; leads to the creation of a written asthma management plan

controlled-release: same as long-acting, sustained-release, or slow-release; applies to some theophylline and albuterol preparations

controller: medicine that prevents or reduces the frequency and severity of asthma episodes, taken daily

corticosteroid: another term for a steroid or cortisone-like medicine
coughing asthma: form of asthma in which coughing is the only symptom
croup: illness usually produced by a virus, in which the larynx and trachea are inflamed; produces a barking cough

dander: scales of dead skin

decongestant: a medicine that reduces congestion (swelling)

discard date: date when an MDI should be thrown away because it will no longer deliver a safe puff of medicine

Diskus: brand name for dry powder inhaler device

diurnal variation: change within a day

DPI: dry powder inhaler

dry powder inhaler: device for inhaling asthma medicines in powder form; depends on the force of inhalation to disperse medicine into the lungs

EasiVent: brand of holding chamber

eczema: a skin rash, also known as atopic dermatitis

effort monitor: part of a holding chamber which indicates the effort a person is making when inhaling medicine

electrostatic air precipitator: air cleaner

eosinophils: white blood cells involved in inflammation

ephedrine: oral adrenergic medicine, bronchodilator; no longer commonly used because of its adverse effects

epinephrine (adrenaline): a quick relief medicine, produced by the body and available in synthetic form

EpiPen: brand name for epinephrine for intramuscular use (injection); used to treat anaphylaxis

episode (flare): period of time when asthma signs or symptoms occur, peak flow scores drop, breathing is changed, or additional asthma medicine is needed

exacerbation: worsening or new episode

exercise induced asthma: a form of asthma in which exercise is the only trigger

exhale: to breathe out

expiration: act of breathing out

extended-release: medicine preparation that acts over a longer period of time than the standard preparation; also called slow-release, sustained-release

E-Z Spacer: brand of holding chamber

family practitioner: primary care physician who sees patients of all ages

FEV₁: forced expiratory volume in one second. This measurement of airflow is done using a spirometer or simple FEV₁ meter.. It provides information about the status of the large and small airways

flare (episode): period of time when asthma signs or symptoms occur, peak flow scores drop, breathing is changed, or additional asthma medicine is needed

Flovent: brand name for fluticasone, an inhaled steroid medicine available in MDI or DPI, controller

flow monitor: part of a holding chamber which makes a sound if inhalation is too fast

flunisolide: generic name for Aerobid, an inhaled steroid medicine, controller

fluticasone: generic name for Flovent, an inhaled steroid medicine, controller

gastroesophageal reflux: (also called stomach acid reflux) backward flow of material from stomach to the esophagus; causes irritation which can lead to bronchospasm

green zone: asthma treatment zone in which there are no symptoms and peak flow is 80 to 100 percent of the personal best

growth retardation: slowing of rate at which height increases

Gyrocaps: capsule containing Slo-Phyllin, a slow-release theophylline preparation, controller

hay fever: allergic condition of the nose and eyes brought on mainly by ragweed or other pollen

HEPA filter: abbreviation for a "high-efficiency particulate air" filter; removes tiny particles from the air

HFA propellant: hydrofluoroalkane, a propellant used in MDIs which does not destroy ozone in the stratosphere (upper atmosphere)

high yellow zone: asthma treatment zone in which there are only mild symptoms and peak flow is 65 to 80 percent of personal best

histamine: one of the chemical mediators of the asthma reaction

hives: itchy swellings of skin usually due to allergy

holding chamber: inhalation device used with a metered dose inhaler that holds the medicine mist to improve medicine effect

home care company: organization that provides many aspects of asthma care in the home, including teaching, monitoring, and review of environment and treatment

hyperresponsive: refers to airways that overreact to various asthma triggers

hyperventilation: excessive rate and depth of breathing

IAQ: indoor air quality

I/E ratio: in/out ratio, or relative length of inhale compared to exhale

IgE: immunoglobulin E, an antibody that reacts with an allergen, initiating the asthma reaction

immunotherapy: synonymous with allergy shots, injection treatment, hyposensitization, desensitization

indication: reason to use

indoor air quality (IAQ): overall healthfulness of the air inside a building

inflammation: a response of the body to physical or chemical triggers; includes swelling due to movement of cells, fluid, and chemicals into the area

inhalation device: apparatus for inhaling asthma medicine

inhaled steroid: inhaled medicine that prevents inflammation in the airways and reduces inflammation that already exists; the most commonly prescribed type of controller medicine for people with persistent asthma

inhaler: also metered dose inhaler (MDI). Device that uses propellant to create a medicine mist that can be breathed into the airways

I/O ratio: in/out ratio, or relative length of inhale compared to exhale

inspiration: act of breathing in

InspirEase: brand of holding chamber

inspiration-expiration ratio: see in/out (I/O) ratio

intermittent flow director: a vent in the nebulizer tubing that, when covered, allows production of mist

internist: primary care physician who sees adult patients

intra-dermal: into the skin

intravenous: into a vein

intubation: placing a tube into the trachea to enable artificial breathing; can be a lifesaving procedure during a severe asthma episode

ipratropium: generic name for Atrovent, an anticholinergic medicine, quick relief medicine

irritant: a nonallergenic substance that may provoke a reaction in the airways

kg: kilogram; 1,000 grams or 2.2 pounds

levalbuterol: generic name for Xopenex, a beta₂-agonist; quick relief medicine

leukotriene: chemical mediator involved in the asthma reaction

leukotriene modifier medicine: class of medicine that blocks the formation or action of leukotrienes in the airways, thereby blocking part of the asthma reaction, controller

liter (L): metric measurement, slightly more than a quart

liters/minute (L/min): a flow rate, applied to peak flow or oxygen delivery

long-acting: synonymous with slow-release or sustained-release when referring to a theophylline or beta₂-agonist preparation

low yellow zone: asthma treatment zone in which symptoms are moderate and peak flow is 50 to 65 percent of personal best

malingering: pretending to be ill

mask: a device that fits snugly over the nose and mouth; used to deliver inhaled asthma medicines

mast cell: one of the cell types that contain chemicals which can produce the asthma reaction

Maxair: brand name for pirbuterol, a beta₂-agonist, quick relief medicine

Maxair Autohaler: brand name for an MDI with a special "breath-activated" release mechanism; contains pirbuterol (quick relief medicine)

mcg: microgram, 1/1,000,000 (one millionth) of a gram

MDI: metered dose inhaler

mean (average) peak flow score: the average peak flow score for people of a certain height, expressed in liters per minute

median peak flow score: the peak flow score at which half of the people of a specific height, gender and age will be able to blow

mediator: a chemical that is the middleman or go-between in the asthma reaction

medicine retaining valve: valve in the exit port of a holding chamber which holds medicine until a person begins to breathe in

Medrol: brand name of methylprednisolone, an oral steroid

metabolize: to change chemically or physically in the body

metered dose inhaler (MDI): device that creates medicine mist for inhalation by using propellant to expel liquid medicine

metaproterenol: generic name for beta₂-agonist, quick relief medicine

methylprednisolone: generic name for Medrol, oral steroid medicine

methotrexate: immunosuppressive drug used to treat severe asthma that does not respond to usual treatment; also used to treat cancer

micron: micrometer, 1/1,000,000 (one millionth) of a meter

mg: milligram, 1/1,000 (one thousandth) of a gram

mite: tiny arachnid (spiderlike animal); skeleton and feces found in house dust can cause asthma

ml: milliliter, 1/1,000 of a liter; same as a cubic centimeter (cc)

moniliasis (candidiasis): yeast infection in the mouth or vagina

monitoring: keeping track of

montelukast: generic name for Singulair, a leukotriene modifier medicine, controller

mouthpiece: part of an asthma device which is put in the mouth

mucus: protective and cleansing material produced by glands in the airways, nose, sinuses, and elsewhere in the body

nebulizer (nebulizer cup): the small plastic device that converts liquid medicine into a mist for inhalation

normal (tidal) breath: usual breathing volume when no extra effort is made

onset of action: time span from when a medicine is inhaled or swallowed until it starts to work

open mouth technique: effective method for inhaling medicine from a metered dose inhaler

osteoporosis: decrease in bone density causing increased bone fragility

ozone: a form of oxygen (O₃) that is a respiratory irritant; one component of smog; see ozone layer

ozone layer: layer of ozone in the upper atmosphere which encircles the Earth, protecting the surface from harmful effects of cancer-causing ultraviolet light

palate: roof of mouth

peak expiratory flow rate (PEFR): speed at which air exits the lungs when you give your fastest blast (a fraction of a second); also known as peak flow

peak flow meter: a device used to measure peak expiratory flow rate

peak flow score: the best of three attempts blown on the peak flow meter, expressed in liters per minute

peak flow zone: one of the treatment zones of asthma management as defined by peak flow scores

Pediapred: brand name of prednisolone, an oral steroid

pediatrician: primary care physician for children

persistent asthma: condition in which a person experiences asthma symptoms two or more times a week (when taking no asthma medicine)

personal best peak flow score: highest peak flow score that an individual has blown on two separate days when the airways are completely clear and technique is good

pirbuterol: generic name for Maxair; beta₂-agonist, quick relief medicine

pollen: potent allergen shed during a plant's flowering season

pollutant: impurity or substance that contaminates the air

post bronchodilator: airflow that occurs after inhaling a quick relief medicine

ppm: parts per million. Number of molecules of a particular substance (e.g., a pollutant) found in a million molecules of air, water, etc.

prebronchodilator: rate of airflow that occurs before inhaling a quick relief medicine

prednisone: generic name of oral steroid medicine; many brand names

prednisolone: generic name for Prelone and Pediapred; oral steroid medicine

Prelone: a brand name for prednisolone, an oral steroid

prick test: type of skin test for allergy

Proventil HFA: brand name for albuterol; beta₂-agonist, quick relief medicine with non-CFC propellant in the MDI

Proventil Repetabs: brand name for long-acting albuterol preparation; oral

puffer: another word for inhaler or MDI

Pulmicort Turbuhaler: brand name for a dry powder inhaler containing budesonide; inhaled steroid, controller

pulmonary function test: a test or series of tests used to measure various aspects of lung function and capacity

pulmonologist: doctor specializing in the care of people with lung diseases

q.i.d.: four times per day dosing schedule
quick relief medicine: inhaled medicine that acts to open constricted airways within minutes (e.g., inhaled beta₂-agonists)
QVAR: brand name for beclomethasone, an inhaled steroid medicine; controller

rast: radioimmunosorbent test, an allergy test that measures IgE (antibody) to a specific antigen

rad: abbreviation for reactive airway disease, a name for asthma

red zone: asthma treatment zone in which symptoms are severe and peak flow is less than 50 percent of personal best; requires immediate treatment

relative humidity: amount of water in the air compared to the total amount of water the air can hold at a given temperature

rescue medicine: quick relief medicine

respiratory therapist: health professional who provides assessment, treatment, and education for people with lung disease

respirable range: size of particles that can be inhaled into the small airways (1 to 5 microns in diameter)

retraction: “sucking in” of the skin between the ribs or above and below the breast bone

ROAD: reversible obstructive airway disease, a term that is sometimes used to describe the asthma condition

runout time: length of time it takes for the effect of a medicine to disappear after the last dose; may be minutes, hours, or days

salmeterol: generic name for Serevent; inhaled long-acting beta₂-agonist, controller

sensitization: process of becoming sensitized to an allergen

sensitizer: allergen or irritant that primes the asthma reaction

Serevent: brand name for salmeterol, controller

serum: the liquid portion of the blood

serum level: the amount of medicine in a quantity of serum

shake test: shaking the MDI canister, an unreliable method for determining whether the MDI can deliver a full puff of medicine

side effect: undesired or adverse effect of medicine

sign: an effect that can be seen or heard by an observer

Singulair: brand name for montelukast, a leukotriene modifier medicine, controller

sinuses: one of the eight bone-enclosed cavities surrounding the nose

sinusitis: inflammation of one or more paranasal (around the nose) sinuses

small airways: airways less than 2 mm in diameter; bronchioles

Space Chamber: brand of holding chamber

spacer: device used with an MDI to improve effectiveness; also known as “holding chamber” or “extender”

Spinhaler: brand name for dry-powder device containing cromolyn; controller medicine; no longer available in the U.S.

spirometer: device used in a doctor’s office to measure various components of airflow

spirometry: the act of using a spirometer

step down: method for bringing asthma under control quickly, then gradually decreasing medicines to the lowest effective dose

steroid burst: a short treatment with oral steroids, usually lasting for seven days or less

steroid: type of hormone produced by the adrenal cortex which has antiinflammatory effects. Also, medicine similar to this hormone that is given by inhalation or orally to help control asthma

subcutaneous: under the skin

sustained-release: synonymous with long-acting or extended-release; refers to theophylline and beta₂-agonist preparations

sympathomimetic: produces the same effect as epinephrine injection or stimulation of sympathetic nervous system

symptoms: any effect on your body that you can feel that is different from usual; for example, a tight chest or shortness of breath

terbutaline: generic name for Brethaire, Brethine, Bricanyl; beta₂-agonist, quick relief medicine

Theo-24: brand name for a long-acting theophylline preparation, controller, oral

Theo-Dur: brand name for a long-acting theophylline preparation, controller, oral

theophylline: slow-acting bronchodilator medicine; controller, oral

tidal breathing: normal, relaxed breathing

toxicity: quality of being poisonous; the adverse effect(s) of a medicine

triamcinolone: generic name for Azmacort, inhaled steroid preparation (controller)

trigger: instigator; precipitating factor in causing airway inflammation and asthma symptoms

twitchy: overreactive, hyperresponsive; used in reference to airways

ultrasonic: sound waves above the range that humans can hear; can cause a medicine solution to turn into a mist.

ultrasonic nebulizer: device that uses sound waves to create medicine mist; usually small, light, and portable. It should not be used to deliver a suspension, such as Pulmicort.

unit dose: medicine in liquid or pill form that is packaged in individual doses

Uni-Dur: brand name for a long-acting theophylline preparation, controller, oral

Uni-Phyl: brand name for a long-acting theophylline preparation, controller, oral

USN: ultrasonic nebulizer

valve: device that regulates the flow of air or other substance

Vanceril: brand name for beclomethasone; an inhaled steroid medicine, controller

vent: tube that can be uncovered to interrupt the flow of air into a compressor driven nebulizer cup

Ventolin: brand name for albuterol, a beta₂-agonist, quick relief medicine

voice box: larynx, part of the upper airways which lies between the throat and the trachea

wheeze: high-pitched whistling that occurs when air flows through narrowed airways

white blood cells: cells whose main function is to defend the body from bacteria and allergens

Windmill Trainer: a feedback device for people who use a MiniWright peak flow meter to improve their ability to blow peak flow

workup: evaluation of a patient

Xopenex: brand name for levalbuterol, a beta₂-agonist, quick relief medicine

zafirlukast: generic name for Accolate, a leukotriene modifier; controller
zone borders: limits of the asthma treatment zones as defined by peak flow or total score of asthma signs
zileuton: generic name for Zyflo, a leukotriene modifier medicine; controller
Zyflo: brand name for the zileuton, a leukotriene modifier medicine; controller