

- **You take lots of medicines.** Ask your HCP if they can combine some, or stop the ones you don't need anymore. Tell your HCP if you don't think that the medicine helps as much as it should or if you feel that your asthma doesn't need as much treatment as you have been given
- **You have a lifestyle that makes having a regular routine difficult e.g. you work shifts.** If your medicines are part of your normal daily routine and habit, you are less likely to forget to take them. Some people take them together with brushing their teeth or having a morning cup of tea. Decide what works for you or ask your HCP for tips on how you can make medicines taking a habit
- **If you are worried you might run out of your medicines.** You can ask your practice to give you several months of treatment at once or your community pharmacist may be able to order medicines for you. Adding the need to get your repeat prescriptions to your usual routine will help you remember to order them
- **You haven't had your inhaler technique checked recently.** Even someone who has had their inhaler for a long time can benefit from the top tips their doctor, nurse, or pharmacist can give. They might offer you a different inhaler to try that might suit you better and be better for the environment. You can also watch videos showing good technique at: <https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos/>
- **You aren't using your medicines as the HCP thinks.** You should tell your HCP this and if possible, why. They will understand and try to help

**And finally, do not stop taking your preventer inhaler (the one that contains the low dose of steroid), even when you feel well it helps keep you well. Similarly, it is important that you attend your asthma appointments, even when you feel your asthma is under control, as you may be able to decrease your therapy.**



**If you need any more information before your clinic appointment, please call us on:**

**Useful contact numbers**

Respiratory Department  
(clinic reception) \_\_\_\_\_

Your asthma nurse: \_\_\_\_\_

**Asthma + Lung UK specialist nurses:**

[www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)

Asthma + Lung UK has a really helpful website with lots of handy information for people with asthma, including information about managing asthma.

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I sometimes forget to take my medicines or take them differently to what is on the label...

## HOW CAN I GET THE MOST FROM MY ASTHMA MEDICATION?

Thank you for being honest. Let's see what changes we can make to help you get the most from them in a way that fits your routine

Most medicines need to be taken in a certain way to give you their benefits. Work with your healthcare provider if you have particular worries or preferences.

## How can I get the most from my asthma medication?

People sometimes don't take their medicines as recommended. Doses can be missed by mistake (for example, simply forgetting to take it, or not knowing when or how to take it) or sometimes intentionally (for example, if it causes side-effects or you don't think it works). With asthma, missing medication doses usually causes people to have more symptoms, asthma attacks, and sadly, they may be at increased risk of dying from their asthma. There can often be a delay between missing doses and the symptoms returning, so this makes it hard to connect the two.

Your healthcare provider (HCP), for example: doctor, nurse or pharmacist, will work with you to find the best treatment to safely and effectively treat your asthma. This happens when you discuss and agree upon the right medicine, at a dose and frequency that fits your routine, and an inhaler type that you like and can use. To do this, the HCP needs to understand what you think about medicines, your asthma and discuss any concerns you have. As your asthma changes over time, so will your medicines. For this reason, you should have regular reviews of your treatment. This will ensure they are still what you need and that you are getting the most from them. There are lots of different asthma medications, so please tell us what is important to you.

This leaflet aims to reassure you that it's good to tell your HCP if you take medicines in a different way to how they think you are. It is not something to hide or to worry about. Your HCP wants to know how you actually take your medicines and work with you to make you feel better. Some people under the care of a difficult-to-treat asthma centre are diagnosed with "severe asthma". People with

severe asthma experience similar symptoms as those in milder asthma, however, these symptoms occur despite high doses of treatment or their asthma may only be controlled when they take high dose treatment long term.

## What is medication adherence?

Most medicines need to be taken in a certain way to give you their benefits. If you don't feel they are making much of a difference, it could be that the medicine isn't right for you, that we haven't explained well enough how the medication helps, that you haven't had enough of it to work properly or that additional therapy is needed. For this reason, your HCP will often assess if enough treatment has been taken in the most effective way – this is called checking your adherence. It isn't a judgement of you, it is simply a way of understanding the next steps.

### To do this, your HCP may:

- Ask when and how often you use your medicines day-to-day.
- See how regularly you pick up prescriptions.
- Take blood and do breath tests in clinic to see if your asthma medicines are working.
- Watch you use your inhaler and if necessary, give tips on how to use it better. If you have an aerosol type inhaler, they will recommend you use it with a spacer to help more of the medicine get into your lungs.
- Recommend the use of an electronic sensor which knows when you have used the inhaler and reminds you when you forget it.

Your HCP is not trying to catch you out, they recognise people sometimes miss doses. Rather, they want you get the most from the asthma medicines to avoid more therapies being added that aren't needed.



**There are lots of reasons why someone does not take their medication as originally planned. If these apply to you, please discuss them with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist:**

- **You don't have enough information about your asthma and still have questions.** This is particularly important if you are worried about having asthma or don't think you have asthma.
- **You don't feel involved enough in treatment decisions.** You should agree to the proposed plan and understand what to expect from the treatment - this should cover the benefits, possible side-effects (and what to do if they occur) and if other options are available. Ask them to explain again if you need it. Some people bring a friend or carer to the appointment so they can help understand your asthma and can ask questions too
- **You pay for your prescriptions.** Your HCP can help make medicines more affordable e.g. by advising on a pre-payment certificate