RESPIRATORY

Common Corticosteroid Questions

WHAT IS A CORTICOSTEROID?

It is a medicine that keeps your airways from becoming swollen. It is used to treat asthma.

When asthma attacks occur, this medicine will reduce the swelling and make it easier to breathe. This medicine can save your life when used as your doctor orders.

HOW DO I TAKE CORTICOSTEROIDS?

Two types of corticosteroids help treat asthma. Both types prevent asthma attacks.

- Inhaled (medicine that is breathed in from a "puffer" or a machine)
- Pills

Most people take the inhaled medicine. You breathe this medicine and it goes directly into your lungs. Inhaled medicine reduces mucus in the lungs. You should use it as your doctor tells you to. Do not skip a dose. If you forget to take a dose, don't double the dose.

When you are feeling better, don't stop taking your medicine. You have more control of your health when you take your medicine as ordered.

Call your doctor or nurse if you have any questions about this medicine and how it works.

WHAT ARE SOME SIDE EFFECTS OF USING AN INHALER?

You may get a scratchy throat or a cough. This can be caused by the medicine staying in your throat or mouth. If this happens, try a spacer when you use your inhaler. Be sure to rinse out your mouth with water and spit it out after using your inhaler. Inhaled steroids do not cause problems with growth.

WHAT ARE SOME SIDE EFFECTS OF USING THE PILLS?

Side effects that can occur after two weeks include:

- Weight gain
- Increased blood pressure
- Thinning bones and skin
- Increased risk of getting infections

Your doctor will know how to help decrease the side effects. Talk with your doctor.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONTROLLER AND A RELIEVER INHALER?

A controller inhaler (corticosteroid) should be used regularly as your doctor tells you, even when you feel well. A reliever inhaler is one you use when you are having trouble breathing. Follow your asthma action plan to know how to control your asthma.

WILL TAKING CORTICOSTEROIDS MAKE ME BIG AND MUSCULAR?

NO, this is a different type of steroid, not like the ones athletes use to build muscles. They work in a different way.

Unison HEALTH PLAN®

FOR MORE INFORMATION about asthma, call Care Management 1.800.414.6675 (TTY: 1.800.473.0989).