



TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH ASTHMA

Medication Used to Treat Asthma

Many children with asthma need to take medication. There are two types of asthma medication that children can be prescribed.

Long-acting medication: Some children may need to take medication on a regular basis to prevent an asthma episode. These medications are taken on a regular basis, usually daily. They are sometimes called controller medications.

Fast-acting medication: Some children may only take medication when they are experiencing an asthma episode. These medications work quickly to relieve asthma symptoms. They are sometimes called reliever or rescue medications.

Some children with asthma may need to take a combination of long-acting and fast-acting medication to keep their asthma under control.

Medication Delivery Systems

Children can be given asthma medication in many forms, such as oral tablets, metered dose inhalers, inhalers using a spacer device, dry powder inhalers and liquid medication for nebulizer use. The form of medication the child receives may be dependent on the type of medication and the age of the child.

Oral Medication: Oral medications are easy for many children to take. Some asthma medications are available as oral tablets and chewable medication.

Metered Dose Inhaler: A metered dose inhaler is used to deliver medication directly to the child's lungs. To get the desired effect of the medication, the child must be able to properly use the inhaler. Children as young as five can be taught to properly use an inhaler.

Metered Dose Inhaler with a Spacer Device: A metered dose inhaler can often be attached to a spacer device. The spacer device holds the medicine in a chamber allowing the child to breathe in the medicine over several breaths. The use of a spacer device with an inhaler allows a younger child (3-5 years of age) to use an inhaler successfully.

Dry Powder Inhaler: A dry powder inhaler is used to deliver dry powder medication directly to the lungs. Dry powder inhalers work differently than metered-dose inhalers; the inhaler is activated when the child takes a breath. Always follow the manufacturer's directions for use and care if a child in your program uses a dry powder inhaler.



Handout 6.2

Nebulizer Machines: A nebulizer machine converts liquid medicine into a mist that can be breathed into the lungs. No special breathing techniques are necessary when using a nebulizer. This allows very young children to get needed medicine into the lungs. Because children do not need to follow any special breathing techniques, many children under 5 will be prescribed medication using a nebulizer machine.

Managing Asthma

Children that have moderate or severe asthma often need to keep track of how well their asthma is controlled. Children over three years old can often be taught to use a peak flow meter to do this.

Peak Flow Meter: A peak flow meter is a portable, hand-held device used to measure how hard and fast the child can push air out of his lungs. Each time the child uses the peak flow meter he gets a measurement or a reading. Measurements with a peak flow meter help the child's parent and health care provider monitor his asthma. These measurements can be important in helping the child's health care provider prescribe medicines to keep asthma in control.