

ALLERGY CONSULTANTS

Adult and Pediatric Allergy

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COMBINATION INHALERS

Advair or Symbicort

You have been prescribed a **combination inhaler** product to help control your asthma. These inhalers are indicated for patients with moderate asthma whose symptoms have not been controlled with one medication alone. They contain two ingredients: an **inhaled steroid** to block the inflammatory process in the bronchial tubes and an **inhaled long acting bronchodilator** to relax the muscles around the bronchial tubes. These medications have been shown to improve asthma symptoms, reduce the need for rescue medication, reduce asthma exacerbations and the need for oral steroids, improve pulmonary function tests, and decrease hospitalizations. In general they are convenient because you receive two medications with each puff.

Advair contains Flovent (inhaled steroid) and Serevent (inhaled long acting bronchodilator) and Symbicort contains Pulmicort (inhaled steroid) and Foradil (inhaled long acting bronchodilator).

Key features of these inhalers are:

1. They must be used daily to be most effective. Studies show that if stopped, your asthma symptoms will return.
2. These medications are not fast acting. Although it may take up to 45 minutes for the Advair to become effective, it lasts for 12 hours. You could feel improvement a bit sooner with Symbicort. They are not to be used as a rescue medicine. You should continue to have your short acting rescue inhaler which may be used every 4 hours as needed to relieve symptoms and before exercise or a known allergic trigger.
3. Do not use more often than twice daily. Side effects from the long acting bronchodilator (Serevent or Foradil) may include rapid heart rate, palpitations, nervousness or tremor.
4. Rinse your mouth after each dose, just like with all the other inhaled steroid medications. A small percentage of patients will get oral thrush (a yeast infection in their mouth). This may be annoying, but is easily treatable. Let us know if you experience white patches in your mouth.
5. There are special precautions that you need to understand about the long acting bronchodilator part of these medications. It is possible, but unlikely, that your asthma may worsen. If that is the case, we trust that you will contact us immediately. These drugs are overwhelmingly safe and effective but there have been a few studies that show an increase in asthma exacerbations in small percentage of patients. These dangers are seen more often when the long acting bronchodilator is used alone. Both medicines have been approved by the FDA for treatment of asthma.

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