Uses and Side Effects of Corticosteroids for Asthma Control

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

Inhaled Corticosteroids for Asthma

Usually used to bring an acute asthma attack under control, inhaled corticosteroids are among the most commonly prescribed and effective asthma medications on the market. During an asthma attack, your bronchial tubes become inflamed and swollen, impeding breathing. Corticosteroids work by reducing inflammation and swelling in your bronchial tubes, thereby restoring breathing.

There are two major types of inhaled corticosteroids for asthma patients. First, your doctor may prescribe a steroid-only medication. Alternatively, you may be given a combination of corticosteroid and beta-agonist drugs to inhale in the event of an asthma attack.

Examples of corticosteroid drugs include:

- Beclomethasone.
- Budesonide.
- Ciclesonide.
- Flunisolide.
- Fluticasone.
- Mometasone.
- Triamcinolone.

Combination corticosteroids and beta-agonists include:

- Budesonide-formoterol.
- Fluticasone-salmeterol.
- Mometasone-formoterol.

Dosages and Use

Dosages of both types of drugs are measured in micrograms. A microgram is one-one millionth of a gram. Your doctor may adjust the amount of medication delivered by your inhaler, depending on how you respond to the inhalation of the drug. If you require multiple dosages for relief, your doctor may prescribe a stronger drug. If you respond to very small amounts of the drug, your doctor may adjust dosage strength downwards.

You should only use the medication as directed by your doctor, and only at the indicated strength. Generally, you will inhale corticosteroids only if you are having an asthma attack, or if you can feel symptoms building up in response to exposure to a known allergen or trigger.

Side Effects of Inhaled Corticosteroids

While these drugs are considered safe, there are a few common side effects. These include:

- Temporary sore throat, increasing in severity with more frequent or stronger doses.
- Hoarseness of the voice.
- Increased susceptibility to throat infections, such as thrush.

One way to control these side effects is to rinse out the mouth after inhaling the medication and gargling with warm water mixed with baking soda.

There is some debate within the medical community as to whether inhaled corticosteroids are safe for long-term use. The consensus is that when used as directed, inhaled corticosteroids pose minimal long-term health risks and are the most effective option available for the treatment of asthma. They are typically used in mild and moderate cases of asthma, as well as severe asthma.

You can reduce your reliance on corticosteroid drugs by being proactive about your asthma control. Here are some tips to help you avoid asthma attacks that might require the inhalation of corticosteroids:

- Avoid exposure to pet dander and dust.
- Control allergies with antihistamines and limit exposure to allergens.
- Do not smoke, and avoid contact with secondhand smoke.
- Monitor your lung function with a peak flow meter.

If your asthma is well-controlled, your doctor may reduce the strength or dosage of your inhaled corticosteroids. This will reduce side effects and limit your exposure to any potential long-term risks.