

Other medicines and asthma

FACT SHEET prepared by the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation NZ

There are a number of medicines available that can make asthma worse in some people. Although, not everybody with asthma is sensitive to these medicines it has been shown that 10–20 percent of people with asthma find that their asthma worsens if they take aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). It is advisable to avoid the medicines listed below if you have asthma.

Which medicines may affect my asthma?

The following medicines that may make your asthma worse are usually:

- Aspirin or acetylsalicylic acid: Taken to relieve pain, fever and inflammation and to reduce the risks of blood clotting
- Beta-blockers: (tablets and eye drops) Taken for heart disease, to control high blood pressure and in eye drops to treat high ocular pressure in conditions such as glaucoma
- NSAIDs: Taken to relieve pain and inflammation
- Complementary/Herbal Products: Such as echinacea, royal jelly

The use of these medications should always be discussed with your doctor or pharmacist.

What should I do if my asthma gets worse after taking these medications?

Follow your Asthma Self Management Plan immediately and start taking your reliever medicine (e.g. Bricanyl, Respigen, Salamol, Ventolin or Symbicort SMART). If you require urgent medical treatment call an ambulance.

What can I do to avoid problems?

Be aware of the medications that can cause potentially serious attacks such as aspirin or acetylsalicylic acid, beta-blockers and NSAIDs. Some health supplements such as echinacea and royal jelly can also make asthma worse. These products are freely available, at supermarkets, pharmacies and health food stores.

Always check that **any** products that you take for the relief of symptoms (e.g. for colds, influenza and pre-menstrual syndrome) do not contain aspirin or ibuprofen or other NSAIDs. Ask your pharmacist or doctor if you are unsure

Always read the information leaflet and any warning labels on all products from all sources. When you consult anyone about your health, make sure that you tell them you have asthma.

If you have a reaction, or your asthma gets worse after you have used any medicines or product you should report this to your doctor as they need to detail this in your medical notes. It is also useful to let your pharmacy know so they are aware of which medicines you react to.

What pain relievers should I take?

Paracetamol has been regarded as the safest medication for occasional use to treat aches, pain and fever in people with asthma. Recent research has suggested that the longer term use of high dose paracetamol can aggravate asthma and may even contribute to the development of asthma. For the moment paracetamol is still regarded as safer than other analgesics, but we suggest that you avoid using it regularly or in high doses if you can.

List of medicines that can make asthma worse

- Aspirin and salicylate based products:
Aspec, Aspro and Aspro Clear, Cardiprin, Cartia, Codcomol, Disprin, Heart Care Aspirin, Solprin, Alka Seltzer, Bonjela, Orased Jel, Applicaidine.
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs):
Diclofenac Apo-Diclo, Cataflam, Diclax, Voltaren, Voltaren D, Ibruprofen Act 3, Brufen, Brufen Retard, Fenpaed, Nurofen, Panafen, Indomethacin Rheumacin, Arthexin, Keptoprofen Oruvail, Mefenamic Acid Ponstan, Naproxen Naprosyn SR, Sonafam, Synflex, Noflam, Piroxicam Piram-D, Sulindac Daclin, Tenoxicam Tilcotil, Tiaprofenic Acid Surgam
- Beta Blockers:
Acebutolol ACB, Atenolol No-Ten, Pacific Atenolol, Carvedilol Dilatrend, Celiprolol Celol, Labetalol Hybloc, Trandate, Metoprolol Betaloc, Lopressor, Slow-Lopressor, Nadolol Apo-Nadolol, Pindolol Pindol, Propranolol Cardinol, Sotalol Sotacor, Timolol Apo-timolol
- Beta Blocker Eye Drops:
Betaxolol Betoptic, Levobunolol Betagan, Timolol Apo-Timop, Timoptol XE

The Asthma and Respiratory Foundation NZ can help you

The Asthma and Respiratory Foundation NZ is New Zealand's not-for-profit sector authority on asthma and other respiratory illnesses. We advocate to government and raise awareness of respiratory illnesses, fund research for better treatments and educate on best practice.

Check out our comprehensive website at asthmaandrespiratory.org.nz