

Starting a trial of inhaled preventer medication

Your child may benefit from starting an inhaled preventer medication to help manage their wheeze or asthma symptoms.

For some children, this medication may be started during their hospital visit. For others, it may be recommended that they see their **General Practitioner (GP) after discharge to discuss starting a preventer medication**, depending on their symptoms and medical history.

A preventer may be considered if your child has:

1. Episodes of breathing difficulty requiring frequent visits to hospital or their GP.
2. Required multiple courses of oral steroids.
3. Frequent wheeze, cough, or breathing symptoms during the day or night that require reliever medication (such as Ventolin/salbutamol), even when otherwise well.

Does my child have asthma?

This can sometimes be unclear in young children. Wheezing is common in children age 1-5 years, especially during viral illnesses. However, not all wheezing is asthma.

In some cases, a trial of inhaled preventer medication may be recommended to see whether your child's symptoms improve or become less frequent. This is called a trial of treatment and can help determine whether your child may benefit from regular preventer therapy. It is a safe and helpful way to tell if your child could benefit from daily asthma medicine.

This will be reviewed by a doctor at the end of the trial period. If it is felt to have no benefit or the effects are unclear, the medication will likely be stopped but this decision should be made in consultation with your child's GP.

What is the medicine?

Your GP can refer to the Australian Asthma Handbook (QR code attached) for medication guidance.

How does the medicine work?

Inhaled preventer medicine works as a steroid-based treatment to reduce swelling in the airways and lower sensitivity to common triggers. The effects of the medicine work gradually, so it may take **up to two weeks** before there is a noticeable improvement in your child's symptoms. It is important that the medicine is taken **every day** as prescribed, even when your child feels well. Many children will outgrow the need for this medication with time or may only require it in winter. Your GP can review this after a trial period.



Asthma handbook
(medicines)

How do I give this to my child?

Inhaled preventer medicine is given by using a puffer (also known as a metered dose inhaler). The puffer should be used with a spacer device and sometimes for maximum benefit. There are helpful instructional videos and information sheets on how to use a puffer correctly listed at the end of this document.

What are the possible side effects?

Possible side effects include:

- sore throat
- hoarse voice
- oral thrush.

These side effects are uncommon in children because the prescribed doses are low.

To reduce the risk:

- rinse your child's mouth with water and spit after each dose, or
- if rinsing is not possible, drinking water after use is recommended
- regularly clean the spacer device according to instructions.

Who can I follow-up with for my child's wheeze/asthma?

Please see your **GP within 4-8 weeks after discharge**.

If your child has not started a preventer in hospital but has been advised to **discuss starting a preventer with your GP**, this review is especially important.

This appointment allows your GP to:

- review your child's symptoms and response to treatment
- decide whether a preventer should be started, continued, adjusted, or stopped
- check inhaler and spacer technique
- discuss asthma/wheeze triggers and long-term management.

Your GP plays an important role in helping keep your child well and reducing future flare-ups.

When to seek help

Preventer medicine is **not a replacement** for your child's reliever medicine (e.g. Ventolin/salbutamol) in the event of an acute flare-up. If your child develops:

- shortness of breath
- increased work of breathing
- persistent cough
- wheeze
- chest tightness
- or any signs of breathing difficulty.

Please follow your child's **Asthma/Wheeze Action Plan** and seek medical attention promptly.



Useful contacts

- Your GP
- Respiratory Care WA [Information and Resources | Respiratory Care WA](#)
- National Asthma Council Australia [My Asthma Guide - National Asthma Council Australia](#)
- Asthma Australia [Asthma Support, Treatment & Resources in Australia](#)

Useful links

- [Kids Health Info: Asthma – videos](#) Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne
- [Asthma Health Facts](#) Perth Children’s Hospital



Asthma health facts (PCH)



The wheezing child health facts (PCH)



Asthma handbook (medicines)



Asthma videos



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