

## TRANSCRIPT (page 1 of 3)

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If you have asthma or seasonal allergies, you may be prescribed Singulair. You may also be familiar with its generic name, Montelukast.

Singulair is a high alert medication, which means if you do not take it exactly as it is prescribed, it may cause illness or injury.

To understand how Singulair works, let's look at how asthma and allergies affect your body.

When we breathe, air enters our lungs where it is cleaned and delivered to the rest of the body through the blood stream.

But the lungs of people with Asthma or allergies are extra sensitive.

Tiny substances like dust, smoke and pollen irritate the lining of the lungs, causing inflammation and swelling. This causes the muscles in the lungs to tighten and contract and leads to increased mucus production. When this happens, it becomes difficult for air to get in and out of the lungs.

Singulair blocks your body from reacting to the tiny substances that irritate your lungs. This prevents your airways from swelling, making it easier for you to breathe.

Singulair comes in a chewable tablet, coated tablet or granules. Your healthcare provider will decide how much you need to take and how best to take it.

Singulair is a powerful medication. Some people should not take it. Do not take Singulair if you are allergic to the ingredients in it. If you are allergic to Phenylalanine, do not use the granules or chewable tablets.

If you are pregnant, planning to get pregnant or are breastfeeding, tell your healthcare provider. This medication is likely safe, but you and your healthcare provider will decide what is best for you.

Before taking Singulair, tell your healthcare provider if you have a history of: liver problems, depression or thoughts of suicide.

Some side effects of Singulair include: stomach pain, dizziness, diarrhea, cough, headache, skin rash, tooth pain, or feeling tired.

*(Continued on next page)*

## TRANSCRIPT (page 2 of 3)

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If you do notice any of these side effects, contact your healthcare provider about how to manage them.

Be aware that Singulair will not stop an Asthma attack that has already started. Always carry a short-acting rescue inhaler with you for sudden asthma symptoms you may experience between doses of Singulair.

If you have an allergic reaction like: trouble breathing, hives, or swelling of your face or throat, call 911.

If you have: seizures, yellow eyes or skin, change in mood or behavior, or thoughts of hurting yourself, call 911 and get help immediately.

This is not a complete list of side effects. Make sure you discuss all possible side effects with your healthcare provider.

Take Singulair exactly as prescribed. Do not change your dose.

If you are taking the Singulair tablet, always swallow the pill whole with plenty of water.

The chewable tablet should be chewed completely before you swallow it.

And if you take the granules, you can put them directly into your mouth or mix them with a soft food like applesauce or ice cream.

If giving Singulair to a child, you can mix the granules with a teaspoon of formula, breast milk or other cold or room temperature beverage. Make sure the granules are consumed within 15 minutes.

Singulair should be taken once a day, usually in the evening. It is important to take this medication every day, even if you don't have symptoms. This medication builds up to help your body avoid asthma attacks and allergy symptoms.

If you do miss a dose, take your Singulair as soon as possible, and then take your next dose the following evening. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip your missed dose and return to your normal medication schedule.

Do not double dose. If you think you have taken too much Singulair, call 911.

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## *TRANSCRIPT (page 3 of 3)*

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Store Singulair away from moisture and direct sunlight. Your bathroom medicine cabinet is not the best place because of moisture. Do not leave your medication where it can get too hot or too cold. Always store your medication out of sight and out of reach of children to prevent accidents.

When you are done taking Singulair, crush all of your remaining tablets and mix them with undesirable trash like kitty litter or coffee grounds. Contact your healthcare provider or pharmacist about the proper way to dispose of your medications.

Singulair can help you breathe easier. But it is a powerful medication that should only be taken exactly as prescribed. If you have any questions about Singulair, ask your healthcare provider and pharmacist for more information.