

Rescue & Maintenance Medicines

Last time, we learned about what can trigger an asthma attack. Now, we're going to learn about how the different medicines your doctor prescribes can help you out. One type is called rescue medicine - and the other is called maintenance medicine.

Oh, I know this one! Rescue medicines come to your rescue when you're having an attack.

You need rescue medicine when you can't breathe and need help fast.

Maintenance medicine is medicine to control and help prevent attacks.

Like brushing your teeth every day to keep cavities away, using your asthma maintenance medicine every day helps keep asthma attacks away.

Who can stay angry at a smile like that?

Don't worry. Big'll be back to normal in no time. But first, I need to explain how and when to use the asthma medicines that Dr. Yan prescribed.

What?! You pop a pill, you wash it down with water and you go on with your day. What's so tough about that?

There's more to it than that. First, you need to know about the two kinds of medication for asthma - rescue medication and maintenance medication.

Okay, so you pop two pills...

Dad, listen to her, will ya?

Oh, alright, I'm all ears... and a few teeth.

Let's hear more about that r-r-rescue idea.

When your son has an asthma attack, he needs rescue medicine, like this puffer with bronchodilator medicine in it. He should always know right where it is and have it with him wherever he goes. That way, if he has an asthma attack, he has help right away. Plus, Dr. Yan also wants your son to use a maintenance medicine. It's used every day. It won't help you in an emergency; but it may keep emergencies from happening. Most maintenance medicine also comes as an inhaler or puffer. This one is a "steroid."

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Steroids? I don't want my kid on steroids!

No, these aren't like those bad steroids you might have heard about in the news. Steroids for asthma calm inflammation in the lungs and can keep attacks from starting. We use this kind of steroid all the time for asthma. They're very helpful. But, there are other types of medicines for asthma, too.

Yeah? Like, how many?

Well, there are bronchodilators and steroids I already mentioned, plus combination medicines, leukotriene receptor antagonists, immunomodulators, and...

Oh, my goodness! Such large words.

Don't worry. Doctor Yan and I will work with you to make sure you understand all you need to know and we'll find the best medicines for your son.

So, why not use rescue medicine every day? Wouldn't that help Big keep breathing easy?

You might think so, but that's actually a very bad idea. Using your rescue medicine too much or too often can hurt you. Plus, if you use them too often, they may not work if you have a really bad attack. That's why you have maintenance medicine, so you don't need the rescue medicine very much.

Wow. Important point. Now that we know all this stuff - does Big know how to take his different medicines?

He will - and so will you in our next episode: "How Asthma Medicines Are Taken".