

“Summer Break” Doesn’t Apply to Asthma Medications



It’s summertime and the living is easy. But it can be dangerous to apply that laid back attitude toward asthma treatment.

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology urges patients to continue to take all asthma drugs as prescribed over the summer, even if you don’t have symptoms. It is the best way to avoid an asthma flare-up.

Studies have shown that patients who reduce or stop taking their asthma medications during the summer months are at greater risk of serious asthma symptoms in the fall. This so-called ‘drug holiday’ leads to a spike in hospitalizations and emergency department visits due to asthma, especially among children and young adults.

Managing your asthma

Long-acting medications (such as inhaled corticosteroids) are taken daily to reduce inflammation

in the lungs, preventing asthma flare-ups. Even though you may feel fine, your lungs depend on the medication to control inflammation.

Short-acting medications (such as albuterol) should be used as prescribed only when immediate relief is needed. If you are using your rescue medication more than twice weekly for relief of symptoms, talk with your allergist to discuss other treatment options to help control your symptoms.

There are many triggers for asthma, and each patient is different. Your allergist can help you develop a plan for avoiding asthma symptoms from triggers such as:

- Pollen, dust, pet dander and other allergens
- Smoke
- Exercise
- Medication

Remember that asthma is a constant companion—don’t use a family vacation or summer camp as an excuse to stop taking medications.

Find additional information on asthma, including a drug guide, at www.aaaai.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Common symptoms of asthma include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and chest tightness. Asthma can lead to loss of sleep and can interfere with your ability to exercise.
- Boys, adult females and blacks are most likely to be diagnosed with asthma. People living in urban areas are also at greater risk.

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To the Point

Doctors aren’t sure why some asthma patients stop using their medications during the summer. There is no evidence that supports taking a break. In fact, stopping medications can put you at higher risk for an asthma attack.