
Some Medications and Food Additives Make Asthma Worse

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications and aspirin:

Some people with asthma should not use acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) such as aspirin and entrophen or products that contain ASA for fever, colds or pain control.

There are many medications and products that can cause asthma attacks in people who react to aspirin. Some examples are Advil, Indocid, and Toradol.

If you need to take medication for fever, cold or pain, talk to your doctor, asthma educator or pharmacist for advice. Most people can take acetaminophen products such as Tylenol and Tempra without any reaction.

Beta-blocker medication:

Beta-blocker medication makes asthma worse and should not be used by people with asthma. In pill form, this medication is used to treat high blood pressure, some heart problems and migraine headaches. This medication is also used in eye drop form to treat glaucoma.

All forms of beta-blocker medication are dangerous for people with asthma and must not be used.

Sulfite medication:

Sulfites are sometimes added to foods such as wine, restaurant salads, dried fruits and vegetables and many prepared foods and drinks. When you read a label, they are listed as sulfite metabisulfite or bisulfite. These can cause sudden worsening of asthma. Asthma symptoms often start within a few minutes or up to an hour after eating or drinking something with sulfite. You may also feel flushed or feel your neck is blocked.

If you get any of these feelings, talk to your doctor and avoid the foods and drinks you think caused the problem. You can ask at the Firestone Clinic for a list of foods that contain sulfites. Remember that new products are always coming out that may not be on the list. You can also have a test to confirm if you should avoid sulfites.

Monosodium Glutamate or MSG additive:

Some people with asthma cannot eat monosodium glutamate as it makes their symptoms worse. This is used in some Asian, Chinese and Oriental restaurants. It is also in the product called Accent.

If you react to monosodium glutamate, you can have symptoms right away or many hours after. You may also have a headache or stomach upset.

Read the labels on all canned and preserved food to avoid problems. It can be listed as monosodium glutamate, glutamine or glutamate.

Contact the doctor or health care provider who treats your asthma if you react to any of the above substances.