

# Medicines for Alpha-1: An Overview

Medicines for Alpha-1 include many medicines used by people with other conditions that affect breathing. These diseases include:

- Asthma
- Chronic bronchitis
- Emphysema
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD)
- Bronchiectasis (damaged airways or *bronchial tubes*)

Your medicines may come in pills, capsules, mists, and powders.

## How medicines for Alpha-1 work

Medicines prescribed for lung disease work in different ways, including:

- Decreasing inflammation and mucus production
- Preventing and/or decreasing [flare-ups](#) or exacerbations
- Opening the airways so mucus can be removed
- Preventing and relieving trapped air in the lungs
- Opening up the bronchial tubes, to allow air to move in and out
- Fighting the infections that may come with a flare-up

## Explore medicines for Alpha-1

Information about medicines can be confusing. To simplify it, we've listed types of medicines according to how they work. These types are called "drug classifications."

You can click on a type to find out

- How these drugs work
- Common side effects
- Their brand names and generic names

New drugs become available all the time. So, if you don't see your medicine, ask your doctor for its drug classification.

## A note about side effects:

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Our descriptions of each drug type include its most common side effects. You may not have any of these side effects. But we want you to be fully informed about the drugs that you take. If you do have side effects, talk to your doctor. They can help you find other treatment options or ways to reduce the side effects.

[Muscarinic antagonists](#)

[Beta-agonists](#)

[Oral corticosteroids \(OCS\)](#)

[Inhaled corticosteroids \(ICS\)](#)

[Combination inhalers](#)

[PDE inhibitors](#)

[Mast cell stabilizers](#)

[Anti-leukotrienes](#)

[Mucolytics](#)

[Antibiotics](#)

[Influenza treatments](#)

[Alternative medicines](#)

## “Take as directed”

Medicines that you swallow — or take by injection — have “systemic effects.” When you take them, they enter your bloodstream and can affect your whole body.

Inhaled medicines, on the other hand, enter your lungs directly. So, they don’t affect other parts of your body as much.

You’ll take some medicines every day. You may take others only when you need them. However, it’s important to follow your doctor’s directions. So, if you’re unclear about when or how often to take your medicine, ask!

## Make a list of your medicines

Bring an [up-to-date list of the medicines you take](#) when you meet with your doctor. It’s also important to take this list with you [when you travel](#).

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Your list should include:

- All the prescription drugs you take on a routine basis
- Any over the counter and alternative-type medicines you take
- Medicines that you only take when you have certain symptoms
- The order and time of the day you take your medicines
- How you take your medicines (for example, as pills or with inhalers)
- An [action plan](#) for taking your medicines when your symptoms worsen or during flare-ups

## **A note about augmentation therapy**

[Augmentation therapy](#) is another treatment for Alpha-1 lung disease. You get IV infusions of human plasma-derived alpha-1 antitrypsin (AAT) from healthy donors. These infusions boost your AAT levels.

***For more in-depth information on this topic, please visit the [Big Fat Reference Guide \(BFRG\)](#). If you are enrolled in AlphaNet's Subscriber Portal, you can access the BFRG [here](#).***