



## Rx Focus

### Asthma in the Winter

Winter in the United States poses different risks for asthmatics. They face many obstacles to their disease that can be prevented. Asthma patients must be proactive by recognizing the signs and symptoms of an abrupt attack.

Warning signs in adults include:

- Increased shortness of breath or wheezing
- Sleep disturbed by shortness of breath or wheezing
- Increased use of bronchodilators
- A drop in peak flow rates

Warning signs in children include:

- Rapid breathing
- Abdominal muscles used when breathing
- Inability to complete sentences because of difficulty breathing
- Wheezing

Prevention of asthma attacks should always be at the forefront of treatment. Patients should be reminded to maintain their medication utilization. Proper use of asthma medications will reduce the likelihood of an event. Should the patient have the signs of an asthmatic episode, it

should be acknowledged and actions should be taken to suppress the symptoms. Advanced planning will increase the chances of a favorable outcome. Asthmatics are urged to use medication daily. Despite the absence of symptoms to have necessary inhalers and/or medications on hand at all times is critical. Patients should be reminded that in the winter, colds and the flu can trigger an asthma episode. These episodes can be more severe due to the concurrent disease states.

Most asthmatic patients use a combination of medications that control and alleviate an asthmatic episode. These products may include short acting and/or long acting Beta-Agonists, inhaled or oral corticosteroids, and leukotriene receptor antagonists. Asthma patients should discuss their therapy with their physician prior to the cold and flu season. While discussing therapy it is important to plan ahead to know what steps to take if an asthma attack should accompany a cold or flu. Physicians advise that antibiotics are not effective in combating viruses and will not cure or alleviate symptoms. Taking antibiotics can lead to bacteria resistance.

Asthma patients who have an attack should use their short-acting beta-agonist inhalers to alleviate the acute attack. If symptoms persist patients are urged to contact their physicians or seek urgent medical attention. Other symptoms that require medical attention include:

- A severe sore throat
- A cough producing large amounts of green or yellow mucus
- Signs of pneumonia, such as a cough bringing up phlegm, a high fever and sharp pains when taking deep breaths;

in addition, winter colds and the flu, indoor pollutants and allergens, exposure to dry air indoors, and receiving the influenza (flu) vaccine seasonally. Patients frequently use non-pharmacological remedies such as air filters, vaporizers and humidifiers to address exposure to indoor air pollution, allergens, and dry air.

As reported through many media outlets, half of the US supply of influenza vaccine for 2004-2005 will not be shipped from Chiron Corporation. Chiron was unable to distribute it's vaccine due to contamination problems. The United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued

### January Health Observances

#### National Cervical Cancer Screening Month

Sponsored by Gynecologic Cancer Foundation  
[www.wcn.org](http://www.wcn.org)

#### National Birth Defects Prevention Month

Sponsored by March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation  
[www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com)

#### National Glaucoma Awareness Month

Sponsored by Prevent Blindness America  
[www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org)

#### Thyroid Awareness Month

Sponsored by American Association of Clinical Endocrinologist  
[www.aace.com](http://www.aace.com)

guidelines for receiving immunization for patients in several high risk groups. These groups include, but are not limited to:

- Patients with compromised immune systems.
- Patients with certain chronic diseases such as asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

It is imperative that asthma patients receive an influenza vaccination yearly. Although influenza vaccination will not prevent illness by the virus that causes colds, it is up to 90% effective in preventing the flu in health young adults. In those patients in which influenza is not prevented, patients report a milder severity of the flu, and thus a reduction in the number of serious complications that can accompany a severe influenza infection.

In addition it is important for patients with chronic asthma to also be vaccinated against pneumonia (pneumococcal disease). Pneumonia is a common complication that can occur in patients that are infected by the flu and remain untreated. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of respiratory infections during the winter, and then employing aggressive treatment can prevent asthma attacks.

#### References:

1. Mayo Clinic Staff. (2003, October 9th). Cold and Flu: What To Do If You Have Asthma. MayoClinic.com. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.com>.
2. 2004-05 Flu Vaccine Shortage. (n.d) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccineshortage.htm>.
3. Mayo Clinic Staff. (2003, July 8th). Asthma Inhalers: How they Work. MayoClinic.com. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.com>.
4. American Academy of Family Physicians (2004, July) Asthma Flare-Ups. Familydoctor.org. Retrieved from <http://familydoctor.org>.



## Industry Report

### Intrinsa Turned Down by FDA Advisory Committee

In the next few years there may be several new medications approved to restore a woman's libido. The first product that attempted to seek approval was Intrinsa (testosterone patch), manufactured by Proctor and Gamble. However, on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004, an FDA advisory committee recommended against its approval due to concerns over lack of safety data. The advisory committee noted a lack of controlled safety data for women using this product for greater than six months. The company noted that while 75% to 80% of women experienced mild side effects (application site redness or irritated skin, acne, facial hair, lost hair or deepened voices) there have not been any major adverse reactions that are attributed to the testosterone therapy.

This medication and others under investigation work differently than the impotence medications currently available for men. The products for men (Viagra, Levitra,

and Cialis) enhance ability, while testosterone in women enhances desire.

Although Intrinsa will require additional safety studies, other products may be approved in the not too distant future. There are currently 12 different products under investigation with six of these that are in or have completed Phase III testing (the last set of test prior to application to the FDA for approval).



## New Drug Approvals

### Combunox® 5mg/400mg

Approved: 11/26/2004

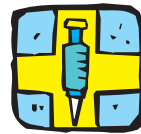
Chemical Name: oxycodone/ibuprofen

Manufacturer: Forest Pharmaceuticals

Approved Indication: Short-term management of acute, moderate to severe pain

Average Wholesale Price: Not Available at this time

Special Notes: Class II Narcotic, this product will be available in March 2005.



## New Generic Approvals

### Cilostazol 50mg tablets

Approved: 11/23/04

Manufacturers: Prasco Labs and Andrx Pharmaceuticals

Brand Name Equivalent: Pletal®

Approved Indication: Treatment of intermittent claudication.

### Clindamycin Phosphate Vaginal Cream USP, 2% (base)

Approved: 12/27/04

Manufacturers:

Brand Name Equivalent: Cleocin®

Approved Indication: Treatment of bacterial vaginosis.



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