Montelukast and asthma – what do I need to know?

Montelukast (also known as Singulair) may be suggested to you to help treat your asthma.
This information sheet will tell you the things you need to know to help you decide if this is something you would like to try.

What is montelukast and why might I be prescribed it?

Montelukast is an 'add on' treatment for asthma. This means it is usually given as well as inhaled steroids if inhaled steroids on their own are not controlling your asthma symptoms well enough.

Montelukast can reduce swelling in the tubes that carry air to the lungs (the airways) and make them less likely to get 'twitchy'. This means, if it is given alongside inhaled steroids, you may have fewer symptoms and better controlled asthma.

You can take it as a chewable tablet usually taken at nighttime, or you can swallow it whole.

Does Montelukast work on everyone?

No, Montelukast does not work on everyone.
Although Montelukast can have make a big difference to some people's asthma, to others it can have no effect at all.
It isn't possible to know in advance who will respond and who won't. The only way to know is to try it. It is important to stop Montelukast if you haven't responded, so you are not taking medicines you don't need.

Are there any serious side effects of Montelukast?

All medicines have possible side effects. This means they can affect some people, while other people get no side effects at all.
Montelukast is the same, but some of the possible side effects of montelukast can be serious and distressing. It is therefore important for you, your friends and your family to look out for them if you are starting Montelukast.

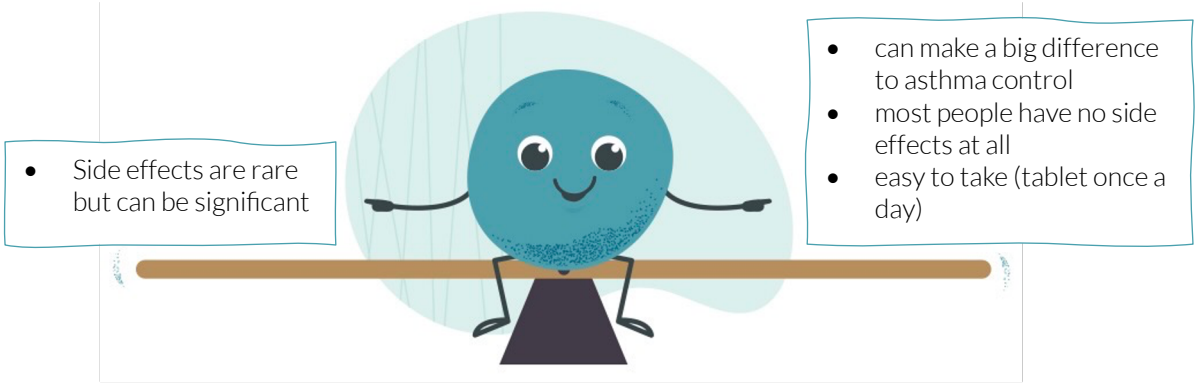
The important side effects are:

About 1 person in every 100	Sleep disturbance: (nightmares, night terrors or difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep)
	Aggression and behaviour change
About 1 person in every 1000	Memory disturbance
	Attention problems
About 1 person in every 10,000	Hallucinations
	Suicidal behaviour

These side effects usually develop quickly (within a week or 2) of starting the medicine and almost always resolve after stopping it.
But they are not likely to go away unless the medicine is stopped.
This is why it is important to look out for these changes and tell your asthma doctor quickly if you see them.

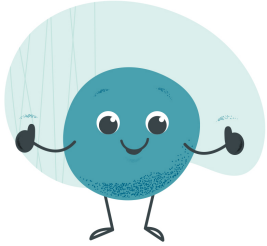
How do I decide if I should take it?

If you doctor has suggested Montelukast, it will be because your asthma isn't well enough controlled.
Montelukast is a good option to help, but it won't be the only option.
Deciding whether to take it means having to weigh up if the risk of side effects is lower than the benefit they may get if it works:



What if I decide I want to have a trial of Montelukast?

- The most important thing is knowing about the side effects and looking out for them:
- Read the patient information leaflet that comes in the Montelukast box
- Be aware of the side effects and look out for them
    - Tell friends, family and teachers about the side effects and ask them to look out for them too – they may notice things before you do
    - If you notice any side effects, contact your prescriber and ask for advice
- If montelukast isn't making any difference to your asthma control after 3 months, ask your prescriber to stop it
- If you do get side effects, its very helpful if you can report them so we can track how many children and young people are getting them and what they are. You can do this via the yellow card scheme at https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk



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