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## Theophylline

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### Some names for this medication are:

- Aminophylline
- Choledyl
- Somophyllin
- Oxtriphylline
- Theo-Dur
- Phyllocontin
- Theolair
- Quibron
- Uniphyl

### How does this medication work?

This medication acts directly on the muscle surrounding the air passages in the lungs called the bronchial tubes. As the tubes relax, they widen and this improves breathing.

This medication also makes the muscles less irritable and prevents them from contracting and narrowing.

Regular use of this medication does not cause it to lose its effect or make you more dependent on it.

This medication may be used alone or with an inhaled bronchodilator.

### How fast does this medication work?

This medication works within 30 minutes.

### How long does this medication last?

- **Short-acting** last for 4 to 6 hours. These include Aminophylline, Choledyl, Oxtriphylline.
- **Long-acting** last for 12 hours. These include Choledyl SA, Phyllocontin, Somophyllin, Theo-Dur, Theolair SR.
- **Other:** Some act for 24 hours such as Uniphyl.

### What amount do I take?

The amount you take depends on your age and the type of theophylline.

### Here are some general guidelines:

**Adults: Short-acting:** 100 to 300 mg 4 times a day

**Long-acting:** 100 to 600 mg 2 times a day (every 12 hours)

**Other:** Uniphyl: 400 to 600 mg once a day

**Children:** Take smaller amounts based on their weight.

Your health care provider may check the level of theophylline in your blood to see if your dose is correct for you.

### **How to use this medication?**

This medication can be taken at the following times:

- When needed to reverse episodes of cough, tightness of the chest, wheezing or shortness of breath. It should not be used more than 4 times a day for the short-acting and 2 times a day for long-acting.
- Before bed, if sleep is disturbed by shortness of breath.
- Regularly, for people with more severe asthma or who have chronic airflow limitation.

### **What are the side effects?**

The most common side effect is an upset stomach with heartburn, nausea, diarrhea or loss of appetite. This medication may also cause headaches, nervousness, sleeplessness or rapid heartbeats. Rarely, seizures or serious abnormalities of heart rhythm may occur. If any of these occur, the dose must be lowered until the side effects are gone.

Many other medications may interfere with removal of theophylline from your body and cause dangerously high levels. Check with your doctor before starting theophylline or taking any new medications if you take theophylline.

### **Consult your doctor or health care provider:**

- If shortness of breath becomes worse or if there is no improvement within a few days.
- If your sleep or activity is still impaired by shortness of breath.
- If you are having any side effects.
- If the medication is not working you need other treatment.

When you talk to your doctor or health care provider early, you should be able to avoid having problems with your daily activities and avoid severe attacks.