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Reduced Doses of Steroids for Asthmatics to be Trialled

A new asthma study will help predict how far steroid doses can be reduced without losing control of the disease, with seventy people being recruited for the study.
Dr Christine Jenkins, Head of Clinical Trials, Woolcock Institute of Medical Research said, "There has been a lot of publicity lately about reducing dosages of inhaled steroids but up until now the process has been one of trial-and-error. This study will look at whether people who take a combination of inhaled corticosteroids and symptom controllers are able to reduce their steroid dose more than people who are on inhaled corticosteroids alone."
"This study will provide us with valuable information about effective asthma management."
Reducing the dose of inhaled corticosteroids is also likely to reduce the risk of side effects for asthmatics.
In international and Australian asthma guidelines, preventers such as inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) plus symptom controllers (long acting b2-agonist or LABA) are the treatment of choice for minimising symptoms, reducing episodes of worse asthma attacks and optimising lung function. The same guidelines also recommend that the preventer (ICS) dose should be gradually reduced once asthma is under good control. However, it is not known whether the symptom controller (LABA) should be continued during this dose reduction.

Dr Jenkins said, "At present little is known about how to predict whether a dose reduction will be successful. Other factors may play a part, such as exposure to allergens during the reduction process. As part of this trial we will see whether the amount of allergen that the volunteers are breathing in affects the amount of medication required to keep their asthma under good control."
The study, which was designed by the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research, will involve 70 asthmatics who are already taking a combination ICS + LABA . Volunteers will use a computerised diary, which monitors their asthma and prompts them to answer questions about any symptoms they experience.