



Beta-Agonists (SABAs and LABAs)

Beta-agonists are a type of *bronchodilator*. They open your airways by relaxing the surrounding muscles. They're like epinephrine, a hormone that gives you a surge of energy when you're scared or excited.

Beta-agonists come in many forms. However, you usually take them with an inhaler or nebulizer. Inhaling them into your airways is the preferred method. That's because it reduces the chance of systemic side effects.

Possible side effects of beta-agonists include:

- Shaking and trembling
- Rapid heart rate
- Dizziness
- Anxiety

Using short- and long-acting bronchodilators

Short-acting bronchodilators open up your airways in 5-15 minutes. And they can keep them open for 4-6 hours. They come in two forms:

- **SABAs** or short-acting beta-agonists. For example, albuterol.
- **SAMAs** or short-acting [muscarinic antagonists](#). For example, ipratropium.

Your doctor may prescribe a SABA/SAMA combination. For example, Combivent™ or Duoneb™. You can use these combos:

- on a regular basis
- as “rescue” drugs when you exercise
- during allergy season

Long-acting bronchodilators last for 12-24 hours. However, it can take up to 30 minutes to feel their full effect. They include long-acting beta-agonists (LABAs) and long-acting muscarinic



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antagonists (LAMAs). Many inhalers contain combinations of long-acting bronchodilators. Using them on a regular basis helps keep your airways open day and night.

Beta-agonists



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U.S. Trade Name ®	Generic Name	INH* (mcg)**	Nebulizer (mg)	Duration of action (hrs)
Ultra-short-acting				
Primatene Mist	epinephrine	125		1
Short-acting				
Ventolin, Proventil, ProAir HFA, ProAir Respiclick Practi MDI-inhaler, Other Generics	albuterol	90-180	2.5-5.0	3-6
Xopenex	Levo-albuterol	45-90	0.63-1.25	3-6
Maxair Autohaler	pirbuterol	250-500	5-10	3-6
Bronclyn, Brethine, Bricanyl, Brethaire, and Terbutin	terbutaline	250-500	0.4	4-6
Long-acting				
Serevent Discus and HFA	salmeterol	0.42-0.50		12
Striverdi Respimat	oladaterol	2.5		24
Foradil	formoterol fumarate	12		12
Perforomist			20 mcg	
Brovana	aformoterol tartrate		15 mcg	12
Arcapta Neohaler	indacaterol	75		24

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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](#).

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