



## Inhalers in Transition What the Change to HFA Inhalers Means to You

If you use an albuterol or levalbuterol inhaler to help manage your asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), you may have heard of the historic move to inhalers that do not contain chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). After December 31, 2008 it is now illegal to manufacture or sell the “old” inhalers with CFCs. This is the first massive change in the inhaler industry in over 40 years, when they were first introduced.

The transition from inhalers that use CFCs, which contribute to the destruction of the earth’s ozone layer, was mandated by Congress in compliance with an international treaty agreed to by most of the countries of the world. They understand the ozone layer is a “protective blanket” worth preserving – it helps to absorb ultraviolet radiation and shields us from cataracts, skin cancer and other health issues.

The new inhalers contain the same medications you have always used, but propellants called hydrofluoroalkanes (HFAs) now replace the CFCs. You may want to discuss some of the following differences with your healthcare professional:

- The **taste** is different.
- The “**power of the puff**” is **softer**, but don’t worry, you are still receiving your medicine! Some individuals have mistakenly taken an extra puff because they felt the soft puff could not deliver the dose they needed.
- The way the medicine is suspended in the canister is different now, so it is important to shake and **prime your inhaler**. Specifications regarding when and how often to prime vary, so check the attached chart.
- Do you use a spacer/holding chamber? If so, now it must be an anti-static device so the medicine does not stick to the walls of the device. Another option is to use an older spacer that has been rinsed with a mild soap and water solution before using it the first time. Drain and air dry only because drying with a cloth may remove the protective soapy residue and also creates static build-up. Spacers should be cleaned and rinsed weekly, depending on use, following these steps.
- If you have used an open-mouth technique with your old inhaler, you should now use the closed-mouth technique, which means placing the mouthpiece between your teeth and sealing your lips around it as you inhale.
- The HFAs in the new inhalers are stickier, causing the holes in the inhalers to become clogged more easily. Follow the cleaning directions in the attached chart to get the maximum benefit from your inhaler....and your healthcare dollars.