

How to Properly Use Your ASTHMA DEVICES

For asthma control, it's important to know how to take asthma medicines correctly. This guide outlines the proper techniques for using asthma devices and equipment, such as metered dose inhalers, spacers and chambers, dry powder and breath actuated inhalers, and nebulizers. It also includes steps on how to clean spacers, chambers and nebulizers.



ASTHMA Care for Adults
Asthma Symptoms, Treatment, Health Management and Activities™

More resources for managing asthma are available in this course: aafa.org/asthmacare

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HOW TO PROPERLY USE YOUR ASTHMA DEVICES

How Do You Use a Metered Dose Inhaler?

If you use a metered dose inhaler (MDI), it is important to use it the right way. If you use it correctly, the medicine makes it into your lungs to help you manage your asthma. If you don't, the medicine might end up on your tongue, the back of your throat or in the air. If that happens, you won't get the medicine you need, and you might not be able to control your asthma symptoms.

The National Institutes of Health's guidelines on the treatment of asthma recommend three ways to use an inhaler the right way:

- Get trained again on the right way to use your MDI at every asthma checkup.
- Use a dry powder inhaler or breath actuated inhaler that releases a puff of medicine as you inhale on the mouthpiece.
- If it is hard for you to use an MDI, ask your health care provider about other options. There are other types of inhalers that release a puff of medicine as you inhale on the mouthpiece.

What Is a Spacer or Holding Chamber?

A spacer is a plastic tube you attach to your inhaler to add space between the mouth and the MDI. This lets the medicine break into smaller droplets so you can inhale more.

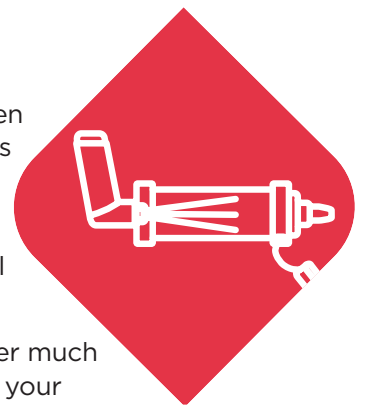
A valved holding chamber adds a one-way valve to the mouthpiece of the spacer. It traps and holds the medicine, giving you time to breathe all of the medicine in.

Spacers and chambers come in many designs. Your health plan may cover much of the cost. Some kinds of spacers work better with certain MDIs. Talk to your health care provider about the right spacer or holding chamber for you.

Do not use a spacer or holding chamber with a dry powder or a breath actuated inhaler.

How Do You Use an MDI With a Spacer or Holding Chamber?

1. Stand up, if possible. Standing or sitting straight allows your lungs to fully breathe in and out. Hold your head in a normal position, not too far back or forward.
2. Remove cap. Prime the inhaler (only if needed) by shaking it for 5 seconds and then spraying it into the air and away from your face and others. Repeat as many times as needed according to the directions on the medicine.
3. Shake well before use. Attach the MDI to the spacer as explained by your health care provider or in the directions that came with the spacer.
4. Breathe in and out a few times to get ready. You should exhale before putting the inhaler in your mouth.



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5. Place the mouthpiece of the spacer in your mouth between your teeth and above your tongue and close your lips around it. (A face mask is required for a young child.)
6. Press down on the top of the inhaler canister. This will put one puff of medicine into the holding chamber. Inhale slowly.
7. Hold your breath for 10 seconds and then exhale.
8. If your health care provider has prescribed more puffs, follow your prescribed instructions.
9. Wipe off the mouthpiece and replace the cover. Store your inhaler at room temperature and keep it dry.
10. After taking your medicine, rinse out your mouth with water and then spit it out.

How Do You Clean Your Spacer or Chamber?

Clean your spacer or chamber once a week to remove powder residue and bacteria.

To clean your spacer or chamber:

- Remove the parts that can be removed, like the back piece and mask, if it has one.
- Soak them in warm water and dish soap for about 15 minutes.
- Rinse the parts in clean water.
- Air dry the parts without rinsing. Do not dry with a towel.
- Put the spacer back together and use again when all the parts are dry.

Note: After taking your medicine, rinse out your mouth with water and then spit it out. Rinsing helps to prevent thrush or sores in your mouth.

How Do You Use Your MDI Without a Spacer?

If no spacer is available, then you can use the inhaler directly in your mouth. But note that use of a spacer or chamber gives the best results.

1. Stand up, if possible. Standing or sitting straight allows your lungs to fully breathe in and out. Hold your head in a normal position, not too far back or forward.
2. Remove the cap on the inhaler and shake.
3. Prime the inhaler (only if needed) by spraying it into the air and away from your face and others. Repeat as many times as needed according to the directions on the medicine.
4. Breathe in and out a few times to get your lungs ready. You should exhale before putting the inhaler in your mouth.



Remember, most MDIs work better with a spacer or holding chamber, except for breath actuated inhalers (like a RediHaler™). Breath actuated inhalers use different instructions.

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5. Put the inhaler in your mouth between your teeth, above your tongue and close your lips around the mouthpiece.
6. Push down once on top of the inhaler to let out one puff of medicine. Release only one puff at a time.
7. Take a slow (3 to 5 seconds) and deep breath in through your mouth.
8. Hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds.
9. Relax and breathe out slowly.
10. If you need to take more puffs, repeat steps 4 to 9. Your health care provider will tell you how many puffs to take. Wait 1 minute between puffs.
11. Wipe off the mouthpiece and replace the cover. Store your inhaler at room temperature and keep it dry.
12. After taking your medicine, rinse out your mouth with water and then spit it out. Rinsing helps to prevent thrush or sores in your mouth.



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How Do You Use a Dry Powder Inhaler or a Breath Actuated Inhaler?

There are two forms of inhalers many people find easy to use:

- Dry powder inhaler (DPI)
- Breath actuated inhaler (for example, a RediHaler™)

A DPI delivers long-term control medicine as a powder. It doesn't need an aerosol to work.

A breath actuated inhaler looks similar to a metered dose inhaler, but you just inhale to take the medicine. There are some that contain long-term control medicine and some that contain quick-relief medicine.

These are not press-and-breathe inhalers. DPIs and breath actuated inhalers deliver the medicine when you inhale. Children, people with severe asthma and people who have acute attacks may not have enough airflow to use DPIs or breath actuated inhalers.

Some of these devices require “priming” before the *first time* you use them and others do not. Priming gets a device ready before use. Follow your specific device's instructions which can be found in the patient information paper that comes in the prescription box or on the drug manufacturer's website.

1. Stand up, if possible. Standing or sitting straight allows your lungs to fully breathe in and out. Hold your head in a normal position, not too far back or forward.
2. Open the cover or remove the cap and hold the inhaler upright.
3. If you are using a DPI, load a dose of the medicine into the inhaler by either twisting it or flipping the lever.
4. Breathe in and out a few times to get your lungs ready, and then finally breathe out before putting the inhaler into your mouth. Never breathe into your inhaler.
5. Put the end of the mouthpiece into your mouth between your teeth and above your tongue and close your lips firmly around it.
6. Breathe in quickly and deeply through the mouthpiece, not your nose.
7. Remove the inhaler from your mouth. Hold your breath for 10 seconds and slowly breathe out. This is one “puff.”
8. Your health care provider will tell you how many puffs to take. Follow your Asthma Action Plan or take medicine as instructed.
9. Wipe off the mouthpiece and replace the cover. Store your inhaler at room temperature and keep it dry.
10. Rinse out your mouth with water and then spit it out. Rinsing helps to prevent thrush or sores in your mouth.

Note: DPIs and breath actuated inhalers DO NOT need a spacer or chamber, to be shaken or to be primed before each use.



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How Do You Use a Nebulizer Machine?

A nebulizer machine, or “breathing machine,” turns liquid asthma medicine into a mist. You then breathe in the medicine through a mask or mouthpiece. Health care providers usually prescribe nebulizers for people who can’t use other devices. Metered dose inhalers used with spacers or chambers, or dry powder or breath actuated inhalers are preferred. Do not share your nebulizer machine or parts with others, even family members.



To use a nebulizer:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Connect the parts of the nebulizer machine according to the manufacturer’s directions. Make sure the tubing and mouthpiece or mask are tightly connected.
3. Pour the nebulizer solution as prescribed into the nebulizer’s medicine cup.
4. Place the mouthpiece in your mouth between your teeth and above your tongue, and create a tight seal with your lips. If you use a mask, make sure you have a tight fit over your nose and mouth. Turn the machine on.
5. As the mist starts, breathe in slowly for 3 to 5 seconds. Continue until the mist stops or until there is no medicine left in the cup.
6. Turn off the machine. Rinse your mouth with water and spit it out.
7. Clean and dry the medicine cup and mouthpiece or mask.

To clean your nebulizer:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Take the nebulizer apart and wash the medicine cup and mouthpiece or mask with soap and warm water. Rinse.
3. Don’t wash the tubing.
4. Shake off water and dry on clean paper towels. Or you can connect the pieces to the machine and turn it on to dry the pieces.
5. Pack up all parts of the nebulizer once everything is dry.
6. Store the parts in a clean container or plastic bag to keep them clean and free of dust and germs.
7. To disinfect your nebulizer, soak the cup and mouthpiece or mask in a fresh solution of one part distilled white vinegar to three parts hot water. Do not soak the tubing. Rinse and dry as directed above. Do this as directed by the manufacturer’s instructions or your health care provider.

Note: Parts of your nebulizer kit may be reusable while others may be disposable. You can confirm your replacement schedule with your insurance plan or durable medical equipment (DME) provider.