NEBULIZERS for the Treatment of Asthma

WHAT IS A NEBULIZER?
A nebulizer machine, or “breathing machine,” turns liquid asthma medicine into a mist. You then breathe in the medicine through a mask or mouthpiece. If your provider recommends that you use a nebulizer, it is important to know what your options are and how they work.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF NEBULIZERS?
Nebulizers come in different models. A tabletop nebulizer is a larger model that needs to be plugged into an electrical outlet. A tabletop model is a good at-home option. Portable or handheld nebulizers run on batteries, and some can be plugged into a car outlet. Portable nebulizers fit into purses and backpacks and can be used anywhere.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING A NEBULIZER?
Nebulizers may be easier to use than some asthma inhalers. Inhalers come in many shapes and sizes. Each inhaler must be held and inhaled correctly. If the inhaler is not primed and breathed in the right way, all the medicine will not get into the lungs. You do not need to prime a nebulizer or time when you inhale, like with an inhaler. Once the nebulizer is set up and ready to use, simply breathe in and out slowly. The soft mist will get deep into your lungs where it is needed most.

HOW CAN I GET A NEBULIZER AND NEBULIZED MEDICINES?
A doctor can prescribe a nebulizer and the liquid medicine that goes into the nebulizer. If prescribed, your insurance company may cover the cost. You can order your nebulizer, tubing, and medicine cups (called a nebulizer kit) from a pharmacy or a durable medical equipment (DME) company. Nebulizers purchased without a prescription (online) may not meet the Food and Drug Administrations (FDA) standards. Work with your doctor and insurance company to find the nebulizer model that is covered by insurance and will work best for you. Most nebulizers will have parts that need to be replaced over time per the manufacturer’s instructions. Work with your insurance company to get replacement parts.

Make sure your Asthma Action Plan states when and how to use your nebulizer. To learn more about asthma medicines, visit aafa.org/asthma-treatment.
To make sure you are using your nebulizer correctly, consider practicing in front of your doctor. Or take a video and bring it to your next appointment.