

Using a Metered-Dose Inhaler (MDI)

Overview

If you have difficulty breathing, you may need to take medication by inhaling it through your mouth. To do this, you use a metered-dose inhaler, or MDI. This device lets you inhale a specific amount of your medication. An MDI consists of a pressurized canister that holds the medication inside a plastic holder that has a mouthpiece. It is often used to take medication for treating asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and other breathing problems.

An MDI is usually used with a piece called a spacer, which connects to the mouthpiece. The spacer holds the dose of medication so you can inhale it better. This helps make sure that all the medication gets to your lungs. Spacers come in different shapes and sizes; your doctor will tell you which is right for you.

How Do I Use My Metered-Dose Inhaler (with a spacer)?

The steps below explain how to use your MDI with a spacer to make sure you get all your medication into your lungs.

1. Take the caps off the inhaler and the spacer.
2. Shake the inhaler hard about 4 or 5 times. (If you have not used the inhaler in a while, or if it is a new inhaler, you may need to prime it. See the instructions that came with your inhaler.)
3. Attach the spacer to the mouthpiece of the inhaler.
4. Breathe out slowly to empty your lungs.
5. Put the spacer between your teeth, and close your lips firmly around it.
6. Keep your chin up and look forward.
7. Press down on the top of the inhaler to release a puff of medication into the spacer.
8. Start breathing SLOWLY through your mouth. Breathe as deeply as you can to help the medication get into the farthest parts of your lungs.
9. Remove the spacer from your mouth, and try to hold your breath for 10 seconds.
10. Pucker your lips, and breathe out slowly through your mouth.

If your doctor has prescribed more than 1 puff of medication, repeat steps 5-10. Wait about 1 minute between puffs if you are using inhaled quick-relief medicine (beta-agonists). You do not need to wait a minute between puffs for other medicines.

- When you are finished taking your medication, rinse your mouth with water, gargle, and spit it out. This can help reduce side effects from your medication.
- Remove the spacer and replace the caps on the spacer and the inhaler.

How Do I Use My Metered-Dose Inhaler (without a spacer)?

The steps below explain how to use your MDI without a spacer to make sure you get all your medication into your lungs.

1. Take off the cap.
 2. Shake the inhaler hard 4-5 times. (If you have not used the inhaler in a while, or if it is a new inhaler, you may need to prime it. See the instructions that came with your inhaler.)
 3. Breathe out slowly to empty your lungs.
 4. Hold the inhaler 1 to 2 inches in front of your mouth.
 5. Start breathing in slowly through your mouth, and then press down on the inhaler 1 time.
 6. Breathe as deeply as you can to help the medication get into the farthest parts of your lungs.
 7. Hold your breath as you count to 10 slowly, if you can. This lets the medicine reach deep into your lungs.
 8. If you are using inhaled quick-relief medicine (beta-agonists), wait about 1 minute before you take your next puff. You do not need to wait a minute between puffs for other medicines.
- If your doctor has prescribed more than 1 puff of medication, repeat steps 5-10. Wait about 1 minute between puffs if you are using inhaled quick-relief medicine (beta-agonists). You do not need to wait a minute between puffs for other medicines.
 - When you are finished taking your medication, rinse your mouth with water, gargle, and spit it out. This can help reduce side effects from your medication.

About HFA Inhalers

Since 2008, inhalers can no longer be made using chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) as a propellant. The most common non-chlorofluorocarbon inhalers use HFA (hydrofluoroalkane). Studies show that HFA inhalers are as effective, and have the same rate of side effects, as the old CFC inhalers, but there are key differences.

HFA inhalers:

- must be pumped four times to prime them. Each brand may differ in how often you need to prime the inhaler.
- have a weaker spray, and people may think it is not working. HFA inhalers give a warm, soft mist with a distinctive taste.
- require you to inhale more slowly, and then hold your breath
- need to be washed with warm water and air dried once a week or the hole may become clogged, and reduce the amount of medication you will receive
- should be replaced every 3 months or after 200 sprays. Check your inhaler instructions as each brand may differ slightly as to when they need replacing.

Keeping Track of Your Medication

You need to keep track of how much medication is left in the canister. If you take your medication every day, this is easy. The canister will say how many puffs it contains. Count how many puffs you need to take each day, and divide the number of puffs in the canister by that number.

For example, if your canister has 120 puffs, and you take 2 puffs each day, the canister will last for 60 days. When you start using a new canister, look at a calendar and count out the number of days it will last. Write that number on the canister.

If you use your inhaler only when you need to, you have to keep track of how many times you spray it. Many MDIs have counters built in. If yours does not, you can get a device that attaches to the MDI and counts the number of puffs as you use it.

You can also ask your doctor to write a prescription for two inhalers at a time. Then, when you empty the first one, fill your prescription so you will always have enough medication available when you need it.

Talk to your healthcare professional about the best way to keep track of your inhaled medication.

Caring for Your Metered-Dose Inhaler

You will need to keep the plastic holder and the spacer clean. Ask your health-care provider to show you how to care for the MDI and spacer that you use. Your MDI will also come with care instructions.

Questions

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us Monday –Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. at **716- 845- 3167**.

Weekends, nights, and holidays, please call Roswell's main number, **716-845-2300** and our Call Center staff will assist you. This phone line is open 24/7.