

Metered-dose Inhalers

Metered-dose inhalers (inhalers or puffers) are used to treat asthma symptoms by delivering an exact amount of sprayed aerosolized medicine. When used properly, inhalers are a safe, convenient, and effective treatment option.

Most inhalers consist of a small metal can filled with a propellant drug solution that sits inside a plastic holder. Each can holds a different amount of medication and it is important to check the package insert and track the number of times the inhaler has been used.



Spacers: Use with each dose. Without a spacer, more medication hits the back of the throat and does not go down into the lungs. A spacer is a chamber that keeps the medicine contained before it is breathed in, to help more medicine reach the lungs.

Using an inhaler *with* a spacer:

1. Shake the inhaler well before use (3 or 4 shakes).
2. Remove the cap and attach inhaler to spacer.
3. Breathe out, away from the mouthpiece.
4. Bring the mouthpiece to your mouth, and place between teeth, closing the mouth around it.
5. Start to breathe in, slowly. Press the top of the inhaler once and keep breathing in slowly for a full breath. Remove the mouthpiece from the mouth and hold breath for 10 seconds, then breathe out.
6. If a second dose is needed, wait 1-2 minutes and repeat the process.



Using an inhaler *without* a spacer:

1. Take the cap off and shake well before use.
2. Breathe out all the way.
3. Hold the inhaler 1 to 2 inches in front of your mouth (about the width of two fingers).
4. Start breathing in slowly through your mouth, and then press down on the inhaler one time.
5. Slowly count to 10 while you hold your breath (if you can).
6. If a second dose is needed, wait 1-2 minutes and repeat the process.
7. Rinse your mouth afterward to help reduce unwanted side effects.

Cleaning the inhaler and spacer:

1. Remove the metal can from the plastic container.
2. Soak the plastic in warm, soapy water for 15 minutes.
3. Rinse carefully.
4. Shake off extra water. Do not rub dry.
5. Air dry upside down on a clean towel.

Note: Don't wash the metal canister.

Some inhalers come in a powder form. Consult the package insert for use and care.