

Metered Dose Inhaler (With a Spacer)

Metered dose inhalers (MDIs) are useful in treating asthma and other respiratory problems. An MDI has 2 parts:

- Canister.
- Curved mouthpiece.

These small, hand-held devices propel or send needed medicine directly to the lungs. But the medicine works only if the MDI is used in the right way. It is important to inhale while you press down on the MDI's canister. Adding a spacer can help you use the medicine the right way. A spacer:

- Helps you to breathe at your own pace.
- Allows more medicine to reach your lungs.
- Prevents medicine from escaping into the air.

A spacer is a 4- to 8-inch tube with a one-way valve that fits on the end of the MDI.

Use of an MDI may be only one part your treatment. It is important to follow all of your doctor's directions. If you have asthma, treatment may include routine use of a peak flow meter and avoidance of things that make your asthma worse.

Dosage and Administration

Take only the number of doses (puffs) prescribed. Avoid the use of over-the-counter inhalers with your prescribed inhaler. If you are using more than one inhaler, it is important to use them in the correct order. Be sure to discuss this with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

*Contact your
doctor right
away if your
inhaler or
spacer is lost
or broken.*

Preparing the Inhaler

- Put the inhaler together (as needed).
- Inspect the spacer for foreign objects; if there is a valve, make sure it is intact.
- Remove the cap from the mouthpiece.
- Attach the inhaler to the spacer.

Using the Inhaler

1. Shake the inhaler and spacer.
2. Hold the inhaler upright with your index finger on top and thumb on the bottom.
3. Exhale fully and gently through your mouth.
4. Position the spacer comfortably in your mouth.
5. Press down on the inhaler.
6. Inhale slowly and deeply for about 3 to 5 seconds as the medicine moves from the inhaler into the spacer.
7. Close your mouth and hold your breath for at least 10 seconds; then exhale.

Repeat dose as ordered. Wait 30 to 60 seconds between doses or follow the package instructions. Wait at least 5 minutes when using 2 or more kinds of inhalers (i.e., bronchodilators, anticholinergics, corticosteroids, cromolyn). (Refill your inhaler medicine as needed; do not wait until the canister is empty.)

Special Instructions

- Breathe out before pressing your inhaler.
- Slowly inhale the medicine through your mouth, not your nose.
- Press down only once when using your inhaler. Wait at least 30 seconds to 1 minute between each puff.
- Breathe evenly and deeply.
- Refill your inhaler medicine as needed; do not wait until canister is empty.
- Contact your pharmacist or doctor right away if your inhaler or spacer is lost or broken.

Caring for the Inhaler and Spacer

- Keep your inhaler and spacer clean. Wash the curved mouthpiece and the spacer in warm, soapy water at least once a week. Dry carefully with a clean, lint-free cloth.
- Keep the cap on the mouthpiece when not in use.
- Do not share your inhaler with your family or friends.
- Always have a spare inhaler on hand.

When to Call the Doctor

Contact your doctor if you:

- Do not get relief from your inhaler or you need to use your inhaler more often.
- Have shortness of breath not relieved by your inhaler.
- Have weakness, increased heart rate, shakiness, difficulty breathing, nervousness, headaches, nausea or vomiting.

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women's Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nmh.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar a el departamento de representantes para pacientes al 312-926-3112.

Northwestern Memorial is an equal opportunity employer that welcomes, respects and serves with dignity all people and does not discriminate, including in hiring, or employment, or admission, or access to, or treatment in its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, religion, disability, handicap, age, Vietnam or other veteran status, sexual orientation or any other status protected by relevant law. To arrange for TDD/TTY, auxiliary aids and foreign language interpretation services, call the Patient Representative department at 312-926-3112, TDD number 312-926-6363. Issues related to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 should be directed to the director of Employee Relations or designee at 312-926-7297.

Developed by: Department of Pharmacy with Medicine Nursing

© April 2010 Northwestern Memorial Hospital

For more information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit www.nmh.org.

1100-07

900747 (04/10)