



## PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

### Correct Use of a Metered-Dose Inhaler

Using a metered-dose inhaler is a good way to take asthma medicines. There are fewer side effects because the medicine goes right to the lungs and not to other parts of the body. It takes only 5 to 15 minutes for short-acting bronchodilator medicines to have an effect compared to oral bronchodilator asthma medicines, which can take 1 to 3 hours. Inhalers can be used by all asthma patients age 5 and older. A holding chamber (or spacer device) attached to the inhaler can help make taking the medication easier for even younger children. These devices are helpful to people having trouble using an inhaler. The inhaler must be cleaned often to prevent buildup that will clog it and reduce how well it works.

- The guidelines that follow will help you use the inhaler the right way.
- Ask your physician to show you how to use the inhaler; then demonstrate your technique so that your physician can make sure you are doing it correctly.
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#### Using the Inhaler:

1. Remove the cap and hold the inhaler upright.
  2. Shake the inhaler (3 to 5 times).
  3. Tilt your head back slightly and breathe out.
  4. Use the inhaler in any one of the following ways: (A is the best way, but C is okay if you are having trouble with A or B.)
    - A. Open mouth wide, with inhaler 1 to 2 inches away
    - B. Use spacer
    - C. In the mouth
  5. Press down on the inhaler to release the medication as you start to breathe in slowly.
  6. Breathe in *slowly and completely* for 3 to 5 seconds.
  7. *Hold* your breath for 10 seconds to allow the medication to reach deeply into your lungs.
  8. Repeat puffs as prescribed. Never take more than one puff at a time (ie, 1 shake and 1 puff). Waiting 1 minute between puffs may permit the second puff to go deeper into the lungs.
- Note: Dry-powder capsules are used differently. To use a dry-powder inhaler, close your mouth tightly around the mouthpiece and inhale very fast.

#### Cleaning:

1. Once a day clean the inhaler and cap by rinsing them in warm running water. Let the inhaler dry before you use it again. Have another inhaler to use while it is drying.
2. Twice a week, wash the plastic mouthpiece with mild dishwashing soap and warm water. Rinse and dry well before putting it back.

#### Checking How Much Medication Is Left in the Canister:

1. If the canister is new, it is full.
2. If the inhaler is one that is used on a scheduled basis (that is, a controller medicine), divide the total amount of puffs in the inhaler and divide this by how many puffs you take every day.

The answer is how many days the inhaler will last. Replace the inhaler after that many days, even if it feels like some medicine is still left over. If the medicine is used only on an as needed basis (that is, a relieve medicine) and you can't keep track of how many sprays you use. An easy way to check the amount of medicine left in your metered-dose inhaler is to place the canister in a container of water and observe the position it takes in the water.

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