

Module 3: All About Asthma Medicine

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Asthma Medicines

People with asthma need medicine that fits their kind of asthma. The doctor will work with you to figure out what your special needs are and make a plan to meet those needs. You should never take someone else's medicine or let anyone else use your medicine.

Some asthma medicines need to be taken when your asthma is getting worse or you feel an asthma attack coming on. It is very important that you follow your doctor's asthma plan for you and follow the directions for taking your medicines. If you do that, you will help prevent an asthma attack and be able to breathe better. That will help you be able to do more of the activities you want to do.



Everyday Medicine

Some asthma medicines should be taken every day to help prevent an asthma attack. These medicines are called controller or maintenance because they help keep your lungs working as they are supposed to. You need to take these medicines even when your asthma is not bothering you.

Some common brand names are Singulair, Flovent, Advair, Pulmicort, Symbicort and QVAR.

Remember, controller medicines should not be taken during an asthma attack. You should use a **quick relief or rescue medicine** instead. If you don't know which inhaler is the right one to take for quick relief, ask your doctor or community health worker before you have an asthma attack.

For more detailed information, visit AIM for Healthy Lungs: [Medication Section](#)



Quick Relief or Rescue Medicine

This is what you need to take as soon as you feel an asthma attack starting. These medicines are made to help you be able to breathe better right away. These are usually medicines that you breathe in to help relax your airways. Sometimes the doctor will tell you to use this kind of medicine before you do exercise or other activities.

Some common names of these types of medicine are Proventil HFA, ProAir HFA, Ventolin HFA, albuterol, Maxair, and Xopenex.

For more detailed information, visit [AIM for Healthy Lungs: Medication Section](#)



Common Quick-Relief Medications

Inhalers

These are often used to send medicine to your lungs. Follow your doctor's directions on how to use your inhaler.

Here are some basic instructions:

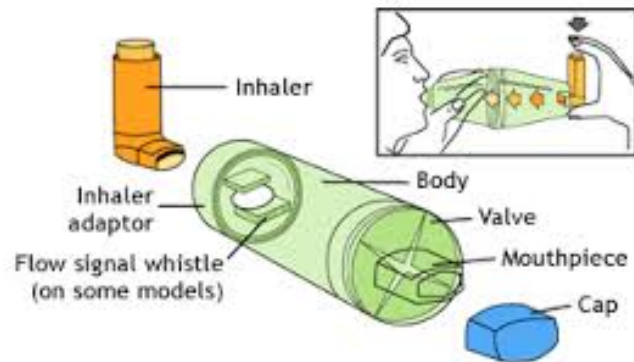
1. Usually, you will shake the inhaler a few times and then take off the cap.
2. Breathe out and then bring the inhaler to your mouth.
3. Start to breathe in slowly.
4. Move the inhaler away from your mouth and hold your breath for about 10 seconds.
5. Then breathe out.



Spacers

If you don't use your inhaler the right way, the medicine won't get to your lungs where it is needed. A spacer can help you get the medicine to your lungs.

A spacer attaches to the inhaler. It holds the medicine in the chamber long enough for you to breath in the medicine in one or two slow, deep breaths. A spacer will help keep you from coughing when using an inhaler. It is hard to describe in words, and there are different kinds of inhalers, but you can see a video about how to use an inhaler and a spacer if you click [here](#)

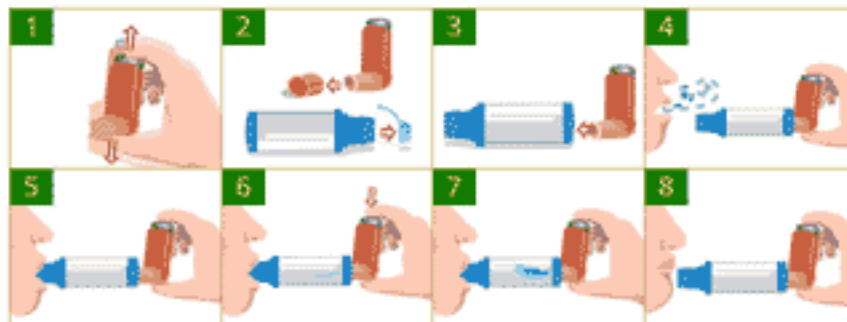


To learn more about how to use a Spacer visit AIM for Healthy Lungs: Spacer Section

To Use a Spacer

Asthma.ca offers great instructions and tips for spacers:

1. Shake the inhaler well before use (3-4 shakes)
2. Remove the cap from your inhaler, and from your spacer, if it has one
3. Put the inhaler into the spacer
4. Breathe out, away from the spacer
5. Bring the spacer to your mouth, put the mouthpiece between your teeth and close your lips around it
6. Press the top of your inhaler once
7. Breathe in **very slowly** until you have taken a full breath. If you hear a whistle sound, you are breathing in too fast. **Slowly** breath in.
8. Hold your breath for about ten seconds, then breath out.



Important Reminders About Spacers

Always follow the instructions that come with your spacer.

As well:

- Only use your spacer with a pressurized inhaler, not with a dry-powder inhaler.
- Spray only one puff into a spacer at a time.
- Use your spacer as soon as you've sprayed a puff into it.
- Never let anyone else use your spacer.
- Keep your spacer away from heat sources.
- If your spacer has a valve that is damaged, or if any other part of the spacer is damaged, do not use it. The spacer will have to be replaced.
- Some spacers have a whistle. Your technique is fine if you do not hear the whistle. However, if you hear the whistle, this means you should slow your breath down.

Pay attention to the directions your doctor gives you about how to use your inhaler and your spacer. There are lots of things you need to know about the kind of spacer you have and how to keep it clean. If you do not understand how to use the inhaler or the spacer, ask your doctor to explain it. It is very important that you understand how to use your medicine. It can save your life.

Cleaning Your Spacer

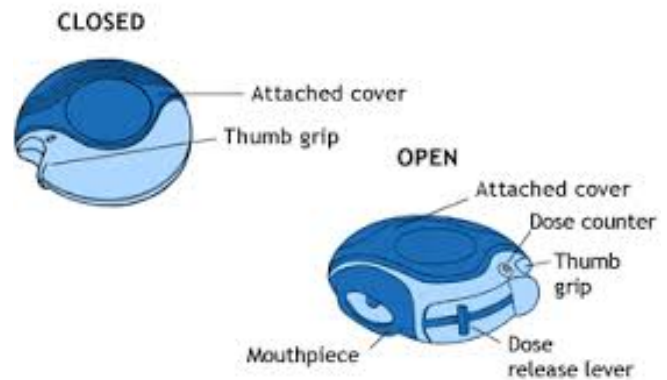
To clean your spacer, follow the instructions that come with it. In most cases, they will advise you to:

1. Take the spacer apart.
2. Gently move the parts back and forth in warm water using a mild soap. Never use high-pressure or boiling hot water, rubbing alcohol or disinfectant.
3. Rinse the parts well in clean water.
4. Do **not** dry inside of the spacer with a towel as it will cause static. Instead, let the parts air dry (for example, leave them out overnight).
5. Put the spacer back together.

Diskus Inhaler

A Diskus inhaler is a flat, round device that is used to deliver asthma medicines in powder form. It has a dose counter window so you can see how many doses are left. Here are some general tips:

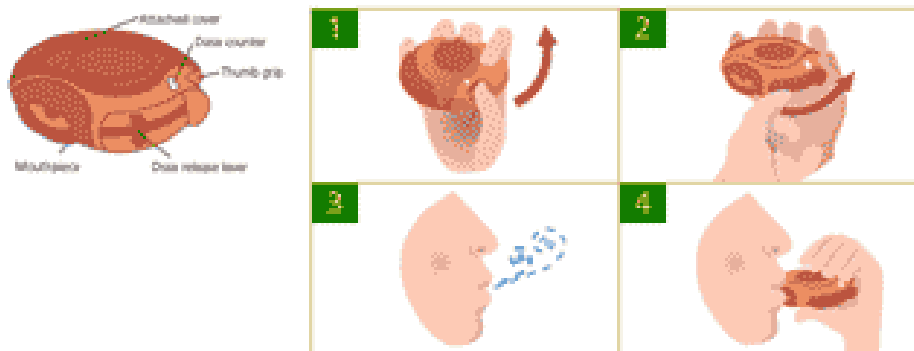
- Never breathe out into the inhaler.
- Never try to take the inhaler apart.
- Always use the inhaler in a level, horizontal position.
- Never wash the mouthpiece or any part of the inhaler – keep it dry.
- Always store the Diskus® in a dry place.



How to Use Your Diskus

The Asthma.ca offers some easy instructions on how to use a disk

1. Open your DISKUS®: Hold it in the palm of your hand, put the thumb of your other hand on the thumb grip and push the thumb grip until it "clicks" into place
2. Slide the lever away from you as far as it will go to get your medication ready
3. Breathe out away from the device
4. Place the mouthpiece gently in your mouth and close your lips around it
5. Breathe in deeply until you have taken a full breath
6. Remove the DISKUS® from your mouth
7. Hold your breath for about ten seconds, then breathe out
8. Always check the number in the dose counter window to see how many doses are left.

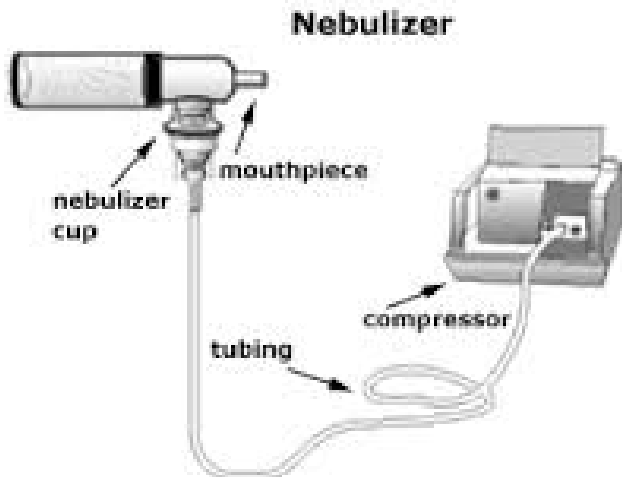


If you drop your DISKUS® or breathe into it after its dose has been loaded, you may cause the dose to be lost. If either of these things happens, reload the device before using it.

What is a Nebulizer?

A nebulizer is a compressed air machine that turns liquid asthma medicine into a fine mist you can easily breathe. Nebulizers are good for young children and people who have severe asthma.

Nebulizers come in many forms. Your nebulizer may not look like the one pictured here, but they all work in about the same way.



Read the instructions that came with your nebulizer since there are many types of nebulizers available.

It's important to keep your nebulizer clean because if it is dirty, it can actually make you sick! If you clean it after you use it, it also helps it last longer.

To learn more about using a Nebulizer and how to clean it, visit the AIM for Health Lungs: [Nebulizer Section](#)

Great job! You're one step closer to finishing the CHECK Asthma Online Program. Hopefully you now know more about how to take your medications.

Now you can move onto the next topic and learn all about environmental factors that can trigger asthma attacks.

