

# Using a Metered-Dose Inhaler for Teens: Care Instructions



## Overview

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A metered-dose inhaler lets you breathe medicine into your lungs quickly. Inhaled medicine works faster than the same medicine in a pill. An inhaler allows you to take less medicine than you would need if you took it as a pill.

"Metered-dose" means that the inhaler gives a measured amount of medicine each time you use it. A metered-dose inhaler gives medicine in the form of a liquid mist.

Your doctor may want you to use a spacer with your inhaler. A spacer is a chamber that you attach to the inhaler. The chamber holds the medicine before you inhale it. That way, you can inhale the medicine in as many breaths as you need. Doctors recommend using a spacer with most metered-dose inhalers. This is even more important when using corticosteroid medicines.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

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### To get started

- Talk with your health care provider to be sure you are using your inhaler the right way. It might help if you practice using it in front of a mirror. Use the inhaler exactly as prescribed.
- Check that you have the correct medicine. If you use more than one inhaler, put a label on each one. This will let you know which one to use at the right time.
- Keep track of how much medicine is in the inhaler. Check the label to see how many doses are in the container. If you know how many puffs you can take, you can replace the inhaler before you run out. Ask your health care provider how you can keep track of how much medicine is left.

- Talk to your health care provider about using a spacer with your inhaler. Spacers make it easier to get the medicine into your lungs. You may need a spacer if you are using corticosteroid medicines. A spacer can also help if you have problems pressing the inhaler and breathing in at the same time.
- If you are using a corticosteroid inhaler, gargle and rinse out your mouth with water after use. Do not swallow the water. Swallowing the water will increase the chance that the medicine will get into your bloodstream. This may make it more likely that you will have side effects.

### To use a spacer with an inhaler

1. Shake the inhaler. Remove the inhaler cap, and place the mouthpiece of the inhaler into the spacer. Check the inhaler instructions to see if you need to prime your inhaler before you use it. If it needs priming, follow the instructions on how to prime your inhaler.
2. Remove the cap from the spacer.
3. Hold the inhaler upright with the mouthpiece at the bottom.
4. Tilt your head back a little, and breathe out slowly and completely.
5. Place the spacer's mouthpiece in your mouth.
6. Press down on the inhaler to spray one puff of medicine into the spacer, and then start breathing in slowly. Wait to inhale until after you have pressed down on the inhaler. Some spacers have a whistle. If you hear it, you should breathe in more slowly.
7. Hold your breath for 10 seconds. This will let the medicine settle in your lungs.
8. If you need to take a second dose, wait 30 to 60 seconds to allow the inhaler valve to refill.

### To use an inhaler without a spacer

1. Shake the inhaler as directed. Remove the cap. Check the instructions to see if you need to prime your inhaler before you use it. If it needs priming, follow the instructions on how to prime your inhaler.
2. Hold the inhaler upright with the mouthpiece at the bottom.
3. Tilt your head back a little, and breathe out slowly and completely.
4. Position the inhaler in one of two ways:
  - You can place the inhaler in your mouth. This is easier for most people. And it lowers the risk that any of the medicine will get into your eyes.
  - Or you can place the inhaler 1 to 2 inches in front of your open mouth, without closing your lips over it. Try to open your mouth as wide as you can. Placing the inhaler in front of your open mouth may be better for getting the medicine into your lungs. But some people may find this too hard to do.
5. Start taking slow, even breaths through your mouth. Press down on the inhaler once, then inhale fully.
6. Hold your breath for 10 seconds. This will let the medicine settle in your lungs.
7. If you need to take a second dose, wait 30 to 60 seconds to allow the inhaler valve to refill.

## When should you call for help?

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Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have any problems using your inhaler.

## Where can you learn more?

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Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **E371** in the search box to learn more about "**Using a Metered-Dose Inhaler for Teens: Care Instructions**".

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