



# How to Use Metered-Dose Inhalers

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## Using Your Inhaler

You can use these general instructions to help you remember the right way to use your inhaler. However, your doctor or pharmacist should also give you specific directions for using the type of inhaler that was prescribed for you. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to show you how to use your inhaler and to watch you as you use it for the first time. Also ask your doctor or pharmacist for a copy of the manufacturer's information for the patient that comes with your inhaler and read this information carefully.

These directions explain how to use metered-dose inhalers. If you are using a different type of inhaler such as a dry powder inhaler, you will need to follow different directions. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you need more information or if you do not know what type of inhaler you are using.

Most inhalers can be used alone or with a spacer (plastic tube that attaches to an inhaler and helps the medication to reach the lungs). Spacers are useful for all patients, especially children, older adults, and patients who are using inhaled corticosteroids (a type of medication used to prevent swelling of the airways in patients who have asthma). Ask your doctor if you should use your inhaler with a spacer. If you will be using a spacer, be sure you understand how to use and clean it. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.

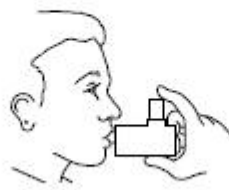
1. Remove the cap and hold the inhaler upright.
2. Shake the inhaler.
3. Tilt your head back slightly and breathe out slowly.
4. Hold your inhaler in one of the following ways. (See below.) Methods A and B are best, but C is acceptable if you have trouble with A and B. Method C must be used for breath-activated inhalers.
5. If you are not using a spacer, press down on your inhaler **one** time to release medication and breathe in slowly through your mouth at the same time. If you are using a spacer, first press down on the inhaler, then within 5 seconds, begin to breathe in slowly through your mouth.
6. Continue to breathe in slowly for 3 to 5 seconds.
7. Hold your breath for 10 seconds if you can to allow the medication to reach deeply into your lungs.
8. Repeat steps 3–7 until you have inhaled the number of puffs that your doctor prescribed. If you are using a quick-relief medication (beta<sub>2</sub> agonists), wait about 1 minute between puffs. There is no need to wait between puffs for other types of medication. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you need to wait between puffs of your medication.

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A. Hold inhaler 1 to 2 inches in front of your mouth (about the width of two fingers).



B. Use a spacer/holding chamber. These come in many shapes and can be useful to any patient.



C. Put the inhaler in your mouth. Do not use for steroids.



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## Cleaning Your Inhaler

1. Look at the hole where the medication sprays out of the inhaler.
2. If you see powder in or around the hole, then you need to clean the inhaler.

3. Remove the metal canister from the L-shaped plastic mouthpiece.
4. Rinse only the mouthpiece and cap in warm water.
5. Let the mouthpiece and cap dry overnight.
6. In the morning, put the canister back inside the mouthpiece and put the cap on the inhaler.

## Knowing When to Replace Your Inhaler

You cannot see the medication in your inhaler, so it is hard to tell when it is empty. Some people think they can tell when their inhalers are empty by floating the canisters in water, spraying the medication into the air, or tasting the medication. However, none of these methods really work, and people who use these methods may continue to use their inhalers after the inhalers are empty. Follow the directions below to be sure that you replace your inhaler when it is empty so that you always receive your full dose of medication.

For long-term control medications that you take regularly each day:

1. Multiply the number of puffs you use at a time by the number of times you use your inhaler each day. This is the total number of puffs you use each day. For example, if you use 4 puffs two times a day, you would multiply 4 by 2 and find that you use a total of 8 puffs each day.
2. Look at the label on your medication canister. The number of puffs that the canister contains should be listed on the label.
3. Divide the number of puffs in the canister (the number that you found in step 2) by the number of puffs that you inhale each day (the number that you calculated in step 1). For example, if your new canister contains 200 puffs and you inhale 8 puffs per day, you would divide 200 by 8 and find that your canister would last 25 days.
4. Instead of following the steps above, you can use the chart below to estimate how long your canister will last.
5. You should note the date that you begin using the canister and count ahead by the number of days you expect the canister to last. This will give you the date that you can expect your canister to be empty. For example, if you started using the new canister on May 1st, and the canister contains enough medication for 25 days, it should last until May 26th. Plan to refill your prescription before this date so that you will not run out of medication.
6. You can write the date on your canister to help you remember when you will need to refill your prescription.

For quick-relief medications that you use as needed:

1. You will need to count each puff that you use.
2. When the number of puffs used is near the total number of puffs in the canister, you will need to get a new canister.

## How Often To Change Long-Term-Control Canisters

# Sprays	2 Sprays/Day	4 Sprays/Day	6 Sprays/Day	8 Sprays/Day	9 Sprays/Day	12 Sprays/Day	16 Sprays/Day
60	30 days	15 days	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
100	n/a	25 days	16 days	12 days	n/a	n/a	n/a
104	n/a	26 days	17 days	13 days	n/a	n/a	n/a
112	n/a	28 days	18 days	14 days	n/a	n/a	n/a
120	60 days	30 days	20 days	15 days	n/a	n/a	n/a
200	n/a	50 days	33 days	25 days	22 days	16 days	12 days
240	n/a	60 days	40 days	30 days	26 days	20 days	15 days

\* If the medication is taken as prescribed, the canister should be discarded as indicated above. Otherwise, the remaining puffs may not contain sufficient medication.

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