How to use a Metered-Dose Inhaler Without a Spacer

1 Shake the inhaler as directed and remove the cap.

2 Hold the inhaler upright with the mouthpiece at the bottom.

3 Tilt your head back slightly, and breathe out slowly and completely.

To get started using your metered-dose inhaler (MDI), talk with your health professional to be sure that you are using your MDI correctly. It might help if you practice using it in front of a mirror. Use the inhaler exactly as your health professional has prescribed.

Use a spacer if you have problems getting the correct timing when you use an inhaler or if you are using corticosteroids.

If you are using a corticosteroid inhaler, rinse your mouth out with water after use. **Do not swallow the water.** Swallowing the water will increase the chance that the medication will get into your bloodstream. This may increase the side effects of the medication.

4 There are two ways to position the inhaler when using it without a spacer. You can hold the inhaler 1 inch (2.5 cm) to 2 inches (5 cm) in front of your open mouth, without closing your lips over it. This method might be hard for some people. Or you can place the inhaler in your mouth. This is the least efficient way to use the inhaler.

5 Start to breathe in slowly, evenly, and deeply; press down on the inhaler one time (start to breathe in, then press); and continue to breathe in slowly.

Some powder may build up on the inhaler, but it is not necessary to clean the inhaler every day. Occasionally rinse the spacer or mouthpiece, cap, and case.

6 Hold your breath for 10 seconds. This will let the medicine settle in your lungs.

If you need to take a second dose, wait 30 to 60 seconds to allow the inhaler valve to refill.

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How to measure my

Peak Expiratory Flow

Remove any gum or food you may have in your mouth.

1 Put the pointer on the gauge of the peak flow meter to 0 or the lowest number on the meter. In this photograph, this is about 50.

2 Attach the mouthpiece to the peak flow meter. Some meters don't have a separate mouthpiece.

3 While standing, take a deep breath.

4 Put the peak flow meter mouthpiece in your mouth, and close your lips tightly around the outside of the mouthpiece. Don't put your tongue inside the mouthpiece.

5 Breathe out as hard and as fast as you can for 1 or 2 seconds. A hard and fast breath usually produces a "huff" sound.

6 Check the number on the gauge, and write it down. This is your peak expiratory flow (PEF). In the photograph at left, the PEF is about 180. **Repeat the steps two more times.** After you have blown into the meter three times, take the highest number you received, and write it in your asthma diary or on another record sheet.

If you have never used a peak flow meter, talk with your health professional about how to use it correctly, and then practice using it.

Measure your PEF routinely. Check your breathing regularly, even if you are feeling good. PEF is lowest in the early morning and highest in the afternoon. When you measure your PEF once a day, **it needs to be done first thing in the morning before you use your asthma medicine.**

If you cough or make a mistake during the testing, do the test over.

Different brands of meters may give different values for results. If you change meters, you will need to determine your asthma zones using the new meter.

NOTE: If your best effort is in your red zone, take your relief medication immediately and call your doctor or go to the emergency room.

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