How to use a Metered-Dose Inhaler With a Spacer

1 Shake the inhaler, remove the inhaler cap, and place the mouthpiece of the inhaler into the spacer.

2 Remove the cap from the spacer.

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

4 Tilt your head back slightly 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 (*press first, then breathe in*). Then hold your breath for 10 seconds, to give the medicine time to settle in your lungs.

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

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.

Using a spacer with an MDI is **the most efficient way to get the most medication to your lungs.**

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.

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.

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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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