



Heritage Medical Group, LLP

Listening, caring, leading.

How to Use Your Inhaler Correctly

Using an inhaler may seem simple, but most patients do not use their inhalers the right way. When you use your inhaler the wrong way, less of the medicine gets to your lungs, making it less effective and wasting the medicine.

It may take a little practice to get used to using an inhaler. Following these steps will help you get comfortable using your inhaler correctly and be more confident that you are getting the right amount of medicine.

Getting Ready

Take the cap off. Make sure the metal canister is in the L-shaped plastic mouthpiece.

Test-spray your inhaler into the air when you first get it from the pharmacy and after you have cleaned the mouthpiece (see next page). You do not need to test-spray at any other time. Holding the inhaler between your index finger and thumb, press down on the canister once or twice until you see a puff of medicine come out. Your inhaler is now ready to use.

Shake the inhaler before each use.

Using Your Inhaler

Hold your inhaler as pictured below (inhaler alone or inhaler with spacer). Stand or sit up straight. Breathe out normally through your mouth. Picture A or B are best, but C is acceptable.

If using the inhaler alone (no spacer attached), take a slow deep breath through your open mouth at the same time as you press down firmly on the top of the metal canister. If using the inhaler with a spacer, first press down on the canister, then within 5 seconds begin to inhale.

Try to inhale the medicine puff slowly to the count of 5. Don't breathe out right away. Try to hold your breath while you count to 10 seconds to allow the medicine to get deep into your lungs, then breathe out slowly.

If your inhaled medication requires more than 1 puff, wait 30 to 60 seconds after your first puff before you take the next one. Be sure to shake the inhaler before each puff. Do not try to take more than one puff of medicine with one breath. This is not helpful and wastes medicine.



Cleaning Your Inhaler

If you see “powder” in or around the hole of the mouthpiece of your inhaler, clean the mouthpiece. Remove the metal canister and rinse the mouthpiece and cap in warm water. Dry them thoroughly.

Keep the cap on your inhaler between uses to help keep it clean.

When to Replace Your Inhaler

Discard your inhaler when all the puffs are used. For your quick-relief inhaler, know how many puffs are contained in your canister and count each puff you use. For maintenance inhalers you take every day, use the formula:

$$\# \text{ of puffs in full canister} \div \# \text{ of puffs per day} = \# \text{ of days inhaler will last}$$

Do not continue to use an inhaler after the number of puffs in the full canister has been used. Even if you seem to be able to get more puffs out of it, those puffs contain only the propellant from the inhaler and you are not really getting any medicine.

