

# Metered-Dose Inhaler, How to Use

## What is a metered-dose inhaler?

A metered-dose inhaler (MDI) is a hand-held device that releases a mist of medicine. It contains a gas that helps the medicine get into your lungs. The inhaler helps send the medicine directly to your lungs as you take a deep breath.

A device called a spacer can be used with the inhaler. A spacer is a special bag or plastic tube attached to the inhaler that holds the medicine while you breathe it in to your lungs.

Several kinds of medicines are available as metered-dose inhalers, including:

- Quick-relief medicine, also called reliever or rescue medicine. This medicine is used as needed to treat asthma attacks. It is a kind of medicine called a bronchodilator. Bronchodilators are medicines that make breathing easier.
- Long-term control medicine, also called controller medicine. Taking this medicine regularly every day helps control your symptoms. It does **not** give quick relief of wheezing in asthma attacks. It is also a kind of bronchodilator.
- Steroid medicine, also called asthma controller medicine because taking it regularly every day helps control your symptoms. It reduces swelling in your lungs by blocking some of the chemicals that cause irritation and swelling. When you have less swelling, you will have fewer symptoms and be able to breathe better.

When you are using more than 1 type of inhaler, you will usually use the bronchodilator first.

## How do I use the inhaler?

There are several ways to use an inhaler. Talk with your provider or pharmacist about this.

1. Shake the inhaler well.
2. If the inhaler has not been used before or if the inhaler has not been used for a while, you must prime the inhaler. Do this by spraying 2 or 3 sprays of the medicine into the air. (Each time you use the inhaler, the next dose is drawn into a chamber inside the inhaler. If the inhaler has not been used or sits for a long time without being used, some of the medicine leaks out of the holding area. This means you will not get the full dose of medicine the next time it is used. Priming the inhaler makes sure that you get the full dose of the medicine.)
3. Hold the inhaler upright so the mouthpiece is at the bottom.
4. For many inhalers the best way to get the medicine into your lungs is to open your mouth and hold the mouthpiece 1 to 2 inches (about 2 to 3 finger widths) in front of your mouth. The best way to use some other types of inhalers is to place the inhaler mouthpiece directly into your mouth and close your lips around it. Use your inhaler as your healthcare provider instructs.
5. Breathe out normally.

6. Press the inhaler down once so it releases a spray of medicine into your mouth while you breathe in slowly. (One spray is called a puff.) Continue breathing in as slowly and deeply as possible.
7. Hold your breath for 10 seconds or as long as is comfortable. This gives the medicine time to reach your lower airways.
8. Breathe out slowly.

If you need to take more than 1 puff, wait 1 minute before taking the next dose. Shake the medicine again and repeat steps 3 through 8 for another puff. Take the number of puffs prescribed by your healthcare provider.

If you are taking an inhaled steroid medicine, rinse your mouth with water after the last dose and spit the water out.

## **How do I clean the inhaler?**

Wash the plastic case for the inhaler once a week with soapy tap water. Rinse well and let the parts air dry.

Do not store your inhaler in places that may get very hot or cold, like a car.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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# Metered-Dose Inhaler: How to Use



1. Shake the medicine.



Or



2a. Hold the inhaler so that the mouthpiece is 1 and 1/2 to 2 inches (about 2 to 3 finger widths) in front of your open mouth. Breathe out normally. Press the inhaler down once so it releases a spray of medicine into your mouth while you breathe in slowly. Continue to breathe in as slowly and deeply as possible.

2b. If holding the inhaler in front of your mouth is too hard, breathe out all the way and then place the mouthpiece in your mouth and close your lips around it. Press the inhaler down once to release a spray of medicine into your mouth while you breathe in slowly.



3. Hold your breath for 10 seconds, or as long as is comfortable. Breathe out slowly.

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