

How to give medicines: asthma inhalers

This leaflet provides instructions on how to use inhalers for asthma medicine. This includes 'preventer inhalers', which are used regularly in order to prevent attacks (this is sometimes called asthma prophylaxis), and 'reliever inhalers', which are used during asthma attacks.

Leaflets on individual inhaled medicines for asthma are available on the Medicines for Children website, www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



This leaflet has been written specifically about the use of medicines in children. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

Your child's 'preventer inhaler' will not reduce wheezing or breathlessness during an acute asthma attack – your child should use their 'reliever' inhaler for this (this is often a blue salbutamol inhaler).

There are many types of inhalers. An instruction leaflet will also be provided with your child's inhaler. This will tell you how to put the inhaler together and how to use it. If you are not sure whether you are using the inhaler properly, or need help, contact your asthma nurse or pharmacist, who will be able to show you or check what you are doing.

Using a dry-powder inhaler

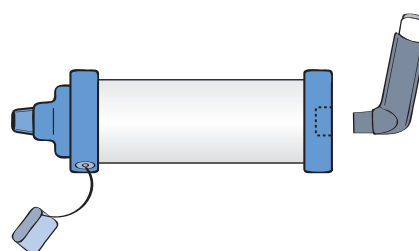
There are many different types of dry-powder inhaler (e.g. Accuhaler®, Clickhaler®, Diskhaler®, Easyhaler®, Novolizer®, Turbohaler®, and Twisthaler®). These are not used with a spacer.

Follow the instructions that come with your inhaler for how to get it ready. If you are not sure how to do this, ask your pharmacist or nurse to show you.

The following instructions are for **most** dry-powder inhalers.

- Ask your child to breathe out normally, as far as they can. Place the mouthpiece of the inhaler firmly between the lips, ensuring a good seal around the mouthpiece.
- Once they have started to breathe in, give (release) the dose as directed by your pharmacist or nurse. Your child should continue to finish the breath in, so that they inhale the puff of medicine.
- Take the inhaler out of your child's mouth. They should close their mouth and hold their breath for 5–10 seconds, or for as long as they can comfortably manage. They can then breathe normally. It is important not to rush this step.
- If your child has to take more than one puff, they should breathe normally for a minute or so before giving the next one.
- Your child should rinse their mouth out thoroughly with water or clean their teeth.

Using an aerosol inhaler with a 'spacer' device



- Put the spacer device together, following the instructions that come with it.
- For a young child, attach the mask to the spacer mouth piece. If your child can hold the spacer mouthpiece in their mouth and hold it firmly between their lips, creating a good seal, you may not need to use the mask.
- Some spacers (e.g. aerochambers) only come with a mask or a mouth piece. If you are unsure, check with your asthma nurse or pharmacist that you have the best type of inhaler for your child.
- Take the cap off the inhaler, making sure that the mouth piece is clean.
- While holding the inhaler upright, place your thumb on the bottom of the inhaler and your first finger on the top. Then shake the inhaler several times up and down.
- If the inhaler is new or has not been used for three days or more, one puff should be released into the air.
- Insert the mouth piece of the inhaler into the spacer. It should fit easily and securely.
- Place the mask over your child's mouth and nose, ensuring a good seal with the skin around the mouth. Reassure your child during this step, as they may be distressed.
- Press down **once** on the aerosol canister with the first finger. This releases one puff into the spacer.
- Hold the mask in place and encourage your child to take five deep and slow breaths in and out. **It is important not to rush this step.**
- If more than one dose/puff is required, wait for one minute then repeat the previous steps.
- Your child should rinse their mouth out thoroughly with water or clean their teeth.

Who to contact for more information

Your child's doctor, pharmacist or nurse will be able to give you more information about your child's medicine for asthma and how to use their inhaler correctly.

You can also get useful information from:

England: NHS 111

Tel 111
www.nhs.uk

Scotland: NHS 24

Tel 111
www.nhs24.scot

Wales: NHS Direct

Tel 0845 46 47 (2p per minute) or 111 (free)

www.111.wales.nhs.uk

Northern Ireland: NI Direct

www.nidirect.gov.uk

Asthma UK

0800 121 62 44
www.asthma.org.uk

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



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The primary source for the information in this leaflet is the British National Formulary for Children. For details on any other sources used for this leaflet, please contact us through our website, www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk

We take great care to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is important that you ask the advice of your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure about something. This leaflet is about the use of these medicines in the UK, and may not apply to other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), the Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading this leaflet.