

Inhalers and Nebulizers for Asthma



Several types of devices are used to deliver medicine in a fine mist right into the lungs. They are used to treat asthma. They can also treat other lung diseases, such as chronic obstructive lung disease. These medicines are the best and safest first-line treatments for asthma.

Types of devices

The type of device you are given will depend on your:

- Age
- Ability to use the device correctly to make sure the medicine reaches your lungs
- Health history
- Personal choice
- Severity and frequency of your symptoms

The most common types of devices are:

- **Metered-dose inhaler (MDI).** This is the most common type of inhaler. It uses a chemical to push the medicine into the lungs. It is held in front of or put into the mouth as the medicine is released in puffs. A spacer can help a person get the most medicine from an MDI inhaler. A spacer is a plastic tube that goes between the inhaler and your mouth.
- **Nebulizer.** This is a machine that sprays a fine, liquid mist of medicine. The medicine is delivered with a mouthpiece or mask. Nebulizers are often used by people who can't use MDIs. This includes babies, young children, and people with severe asthma. A nebulizer treatment may take 5 to 15 minutes.
- **Dry powder inhaler.** Dry powder is inhaled with these devices. The medicine is released when you breathe in at the mouthpiece. These inhalers may be used by children and adults. They must be kept dry. This stops the powder from clumping together.

Medicines in the devices

These devices may deliver both quick-relief and controller medicines. For example:

- Corticosteroids to reduce airway swelling and inflammation
- Bronchodilators to open narrowed airways
- Other medicines for some lung conditions

Talk with your healthcare provider, nurse, or pharmacist about how to use the device prescribed for you. Read and follow the device directions. And make sure you know how to keep your inhaler or nebulizer clean. Clean your inhaler or nebulizer after every use. Or as directed by the information in the medicine box. Always remember to remove the metal canister from your inhaler before cleaning the plastic boot.

If you use a steroid inhaler, make sure to swish, rinse, and gargle with water after using it. This is to prevent thrush, a fungal infection. Spit the water out. Don't swallow it. Wash your face with warm water to prevent a skin rash if you use a mask.

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