



MDwise

A McLaren Company

Breathing Problems: Using a Metered-Dose Inhaler

Table of Contents

- Breathing Problems: Using a Metered-Dose Inhaler

Overview

A metered-dose inhaler lets you breathe medicine into your lungs quickly. Inhaled medicine works faster than the same medicine in a pill. An inhaler allows you to take less medicine than you would need if you took it as a pill.

"Metered-dose" means that the inhaler gives a measured amount of medicine each time you use it. A metered-dose inhaler gives medicine in the form of a liquid mist.

Your doctor may want you to use a spacer with your inhaler. A spacer is a chamber that you attach to the inhaler. The chamber holds the medicine before you inhale it. That way, you can inhale the medicine in as many breaths as you need. Doctors recommend using a spacer with most metered-dose inhalers. This is even more important when using corticosteroid medicines.

How to use the inhaler

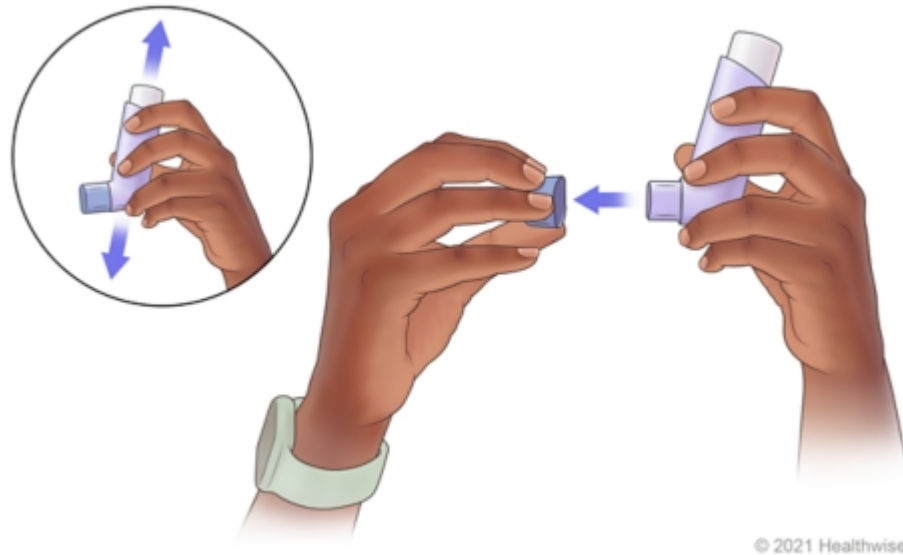
Getting started

To get started:

- Talk with your doctor to be sure you are using your inhaler the right way. It might help if you practice using it in front of a mirror. Use the inhaler exactly as prescribed.
- Check that you have the correct medicine. If you use more than one inhaler, put a label on each one. This will let you know which one to use at the right time.
- Keep track of how much medicine is in the inhaler. Check the label to see how many doses are in the container. If you know how many puffs you can take, you can replace the inhaler before you run out. Ask your health care provider how you can keep track of how much medicine is left.
- Talk to your doctor about using a spacer with your inhaler. Spacers make it easier to get the medicine into your lungs. You may need a spacer if you are using corticosteroid medicines. A spacer can also help if you have problems pressing the inhaler and breathing in at the same time.
- If you are using a corticosteroid inhaler, gargle and rinse out your mouth with water after use. Do not swallow the water. Swallowing the water will increase the chance that the medicine will get into your bloodstream. This may make it more likely that you will have side effects.

Using the inhaler with a spacer

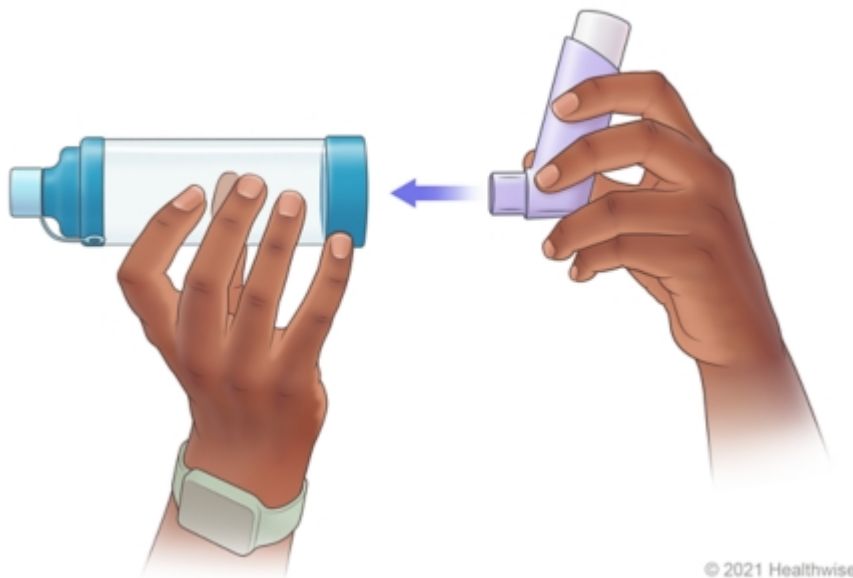
Shake the inhaler and remove its cap: Step 1



slide 1 of 8

Shake the inhaler and remove the inhaler cap. Check the inhaler instructions to see if you need to prime your inhaler before you use it. If it needs priming, follow the instructions on how to do it.

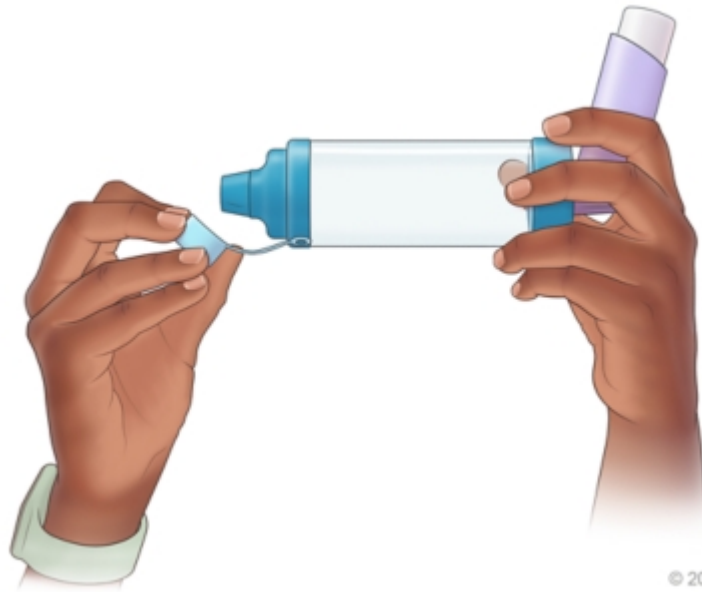
Place the mouthpiece into the spacer: Step 2



slide 2 of 8

Place the mouthpiece of the inhaler into the end of spacer.

Remove the spacer cap: Step 3



slide 3 of 8

Remove the cap from the end of the spacer.

Hold the inhaler upright: Step 4



slide 4 of 8

Hold the inhaler upright with the mouthpiece at the bottom.

Breathe out slowly and completely: Step 5



© 2021 Healthwise

slide 5 of 8

Stand or sit up straight. Tilt your head back slightly and breathe out slowly and completely.

Place the spacer's mouthpiece: Step 6

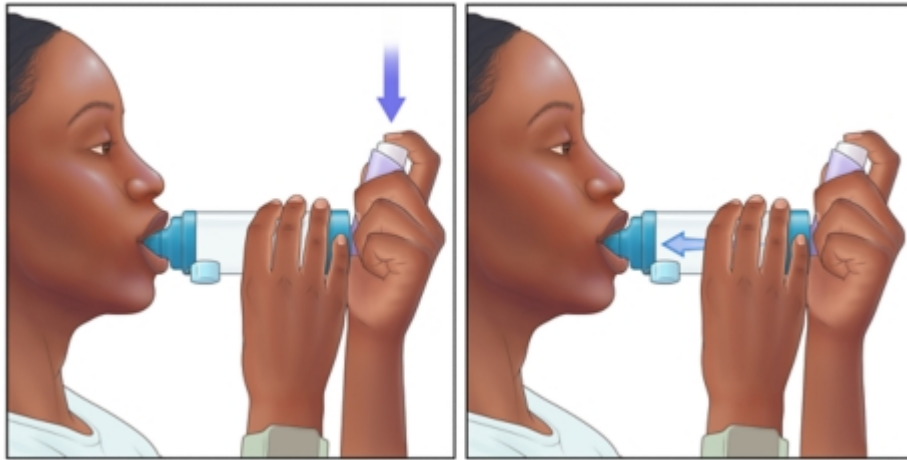


© 2021 Healthwise

slide 6 of 8

Place the spacer's mouthpiece in your mouth.

Press down on the inhaler and breathe in: Step 7

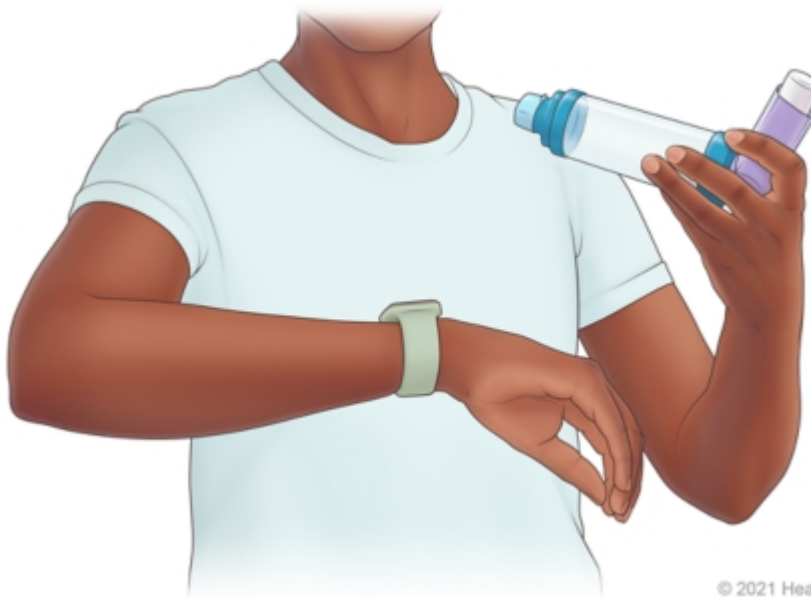


© 2021 Healthwise

slide 7 of 8

Press down on the inhaler to spray one puff of medicine into the spacer and then start breathing in slowly and deeply. (Press first, then breathe in.)

Wait for 10 seconds: Step 8



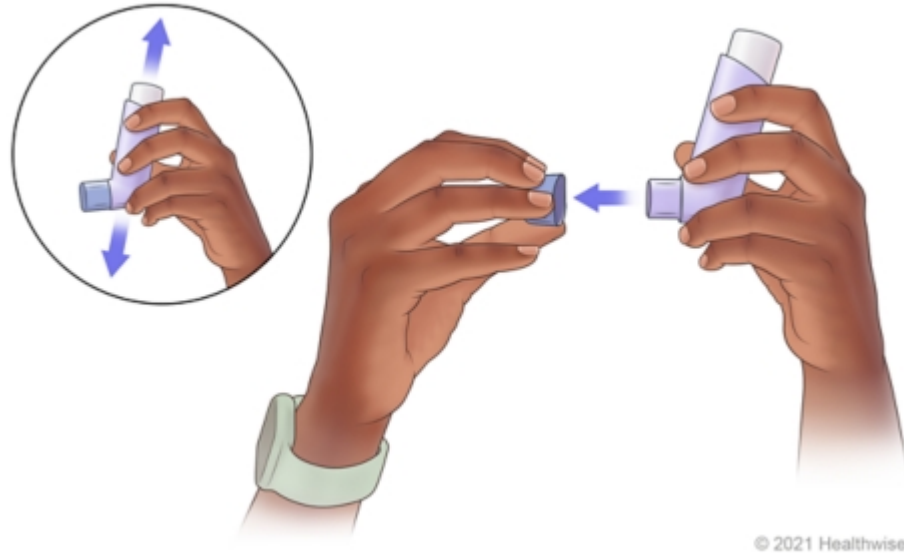
© 2021 Healthwise

slide 8 of 8

Hold your breath for 10 seconds, to give the medicine time to settle in your lungs. Then breathe out slowly. If you need to take a second dose, wait 30 to 60 seconds to allow the inhaler valve to refill.

Using the inhaler without a spacer

Shake inhaler and remove cap: Step 1



slide 1 of 6

Shake the inhaler as directed, and remove the cap. Check the inhaler instructions to see if you need to prime your inhaler before you use it. If it needs priming, follow the instructions for how to do it.

Hold inhaler upright: Step 2



slide 2 of 6

Hold the inhaler upright with the mouthpiece at the bottom.

Tilt head back and breathe out: Step 3



© 2021 Healthwise

slide 3 of 6

Stand or sit up straight. Tilt your head back slightly, and breathe out slowly and completely.

Position the inhaler: Step 4

Two ways to position inhaler

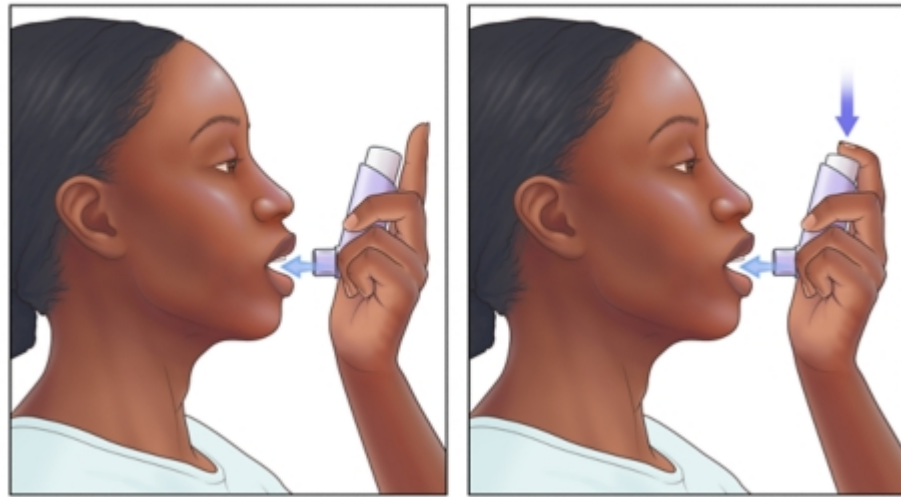


© 2021 Healthwise

slide 4 of 6

There are two ways to position the inhaler when using it without a spacer. You can place the inhaler in your mouth. Or you can hold the inhaler 1 in. (2.5 cm) to 2 in. (5.0 cm) in front of your open mouth, without closing your lips over it. This method may be better for getting the medicine into your lungs. But some people may find this too hard to do.

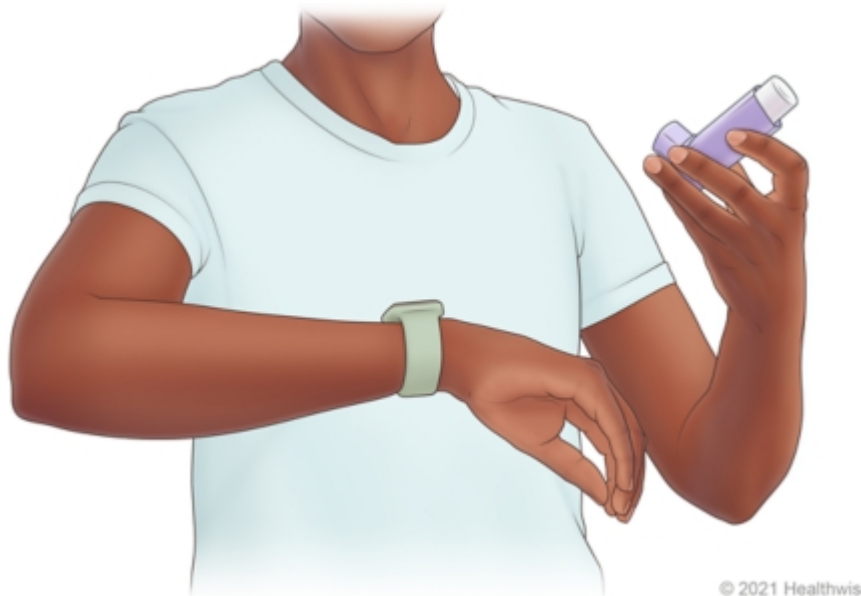
Start breathing in and press on the inhaler: Step 5



slide 5 of 6

Start to breathe in slowly, evenly, and deeply; press down on the inhaler one time (start to breathe in, then press); and continue to breathe in slowly.

Hold your breath: Step 6



slide 6 of 6

Hold your breath for 10 seconds. This will let the medicine settle in your lungs. Then breathe out slowly. If you need to take a second dose, wait 30 to 60 seconds to allow the inhaler valve to refill.

Related Information

- Breathing Problems: Helping a Child Use a Metered-Dose Inhaler and Mask Spacer

Credits

Current as of: July 6, 2021

Author: Healthwise Staff

Medical Review:

E. Gregory Thompson MD - Internal Medicine

Adam Husney MD - Family Medicine

Martin J. Gabica MD - Family Medicine

Note: The "printer friendly" document will not contain all the information available in the online document. Some information (e.g. cross-references to other topics, definitions or medical illustrations) is only available in the online version.



This information does not replace the advice of a doctor. Healthwise, Incorporated, disclaims any warranty or liability for your use of this information.

© 1995-2022 Healthwise, Incorporated. Healthwise, Healthwise for every health decision, and the Healthwise logo are trademarks of Healthwise, Incorporated.