

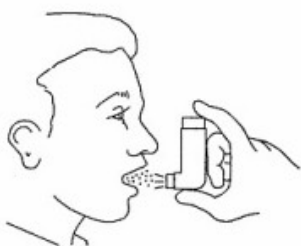
# How to Use Your Metered-Dose Inhaler the Right Way

Using an inhaler seems simple, but most patients do not use it correctly. When you use your inhaler the wrong way, less medicine can get to your lungs. (Your health care provider may give you other types of inhalers). For the next two weeks, read these steps aloud as you do them or ask someone to read them to you. Ask your provider to check how well you are using your inhaler. Use your inhaler in one of the three ways pictured below (B is best, but A and C can be used if you have trouble with B).

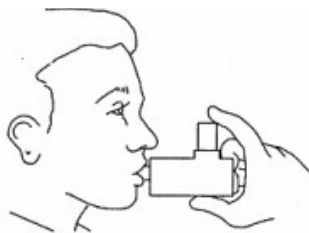
## Steps for using your inhaler

### Getting Ready

1. Take off the cap and shake the inhaler.
2. Breathe out all the way.
3. Hold your inhaler the way your provider instructed (A, B and C below).



A. Hold inhaler one to two inches in front of your mouth (about the width of two fingers.)



B. Use a spacer/holding chamber. These come in many shapes and can be useful to any patient.



C. Put the inhaler in your mouth. Do not use for steroids.

### Breathe In Slowly

4. As you start breathing in slowly through your mouth, press down on the inhaler one time. (If you use a holding chamber, first press down on the inhaler. Within five seconds, begin to breathe in slowly.)
5. Keep breathing in slowly, as deeply as you can.

### Hold Your Breath

6. Hold your breath as you count to ten slowly, if you can.
7. For inhaled quick-relief medicine (beta2-agonists), wait about one minute between puffs. There is no need to wait between puffs for other medicines.

If you are using a steroidal inhaler, you need to rinse and spit your mouth after each use to prevent getting an oral infection.

## **Clean your inhaler as needed**

Look at the hole where the medicine sprays out from your inhaler. If you see “powder” in or around the hole, clean the inhaler. Remove the metal canister from the L-shaped plastic mouthpiece. Rinse only the mouthpiece and cap in warm water. Let them dry overnight. In the morning, put the canister back inside. Put the cap on.

## **Know when to replace your inhaler**

For medicines you take each day (an example):

- Your new canister has 200 puffs (number of puffs is listed on canister) and you are told to take eight puffs per day.
- 200 puffs in canister, divided by 8 puffs per day = 25 days.
- So this canister will last 25 days. If you start using this inhaler on May 1, replace it on or before May 25.
- You can write the date on your canister.
- For quick-relief medicine; take as needed and count each puff!
- Do not put your canister in water to see if it is empty. This does not work.

### **Reference**

*From Facts About Controlling Asthma, National Asthma Education and Prevention Program, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, NIH Publication No. 97-2339 – A Reproducible handout*