

Metered Dose Inhalers

A metered dose inhaler (MDI) is a device that delivers a mist of medicine that can be breathed directly into the lungs. Medicines given this way work faster and with fewer side effects.

How an MDI works

The medicine is held under pressure in a canister that fits inside a plastic device. When you press the canister down in its plastic case, the medicine puffs out in a measured dose. The MDI has to be triggered at the exact moment that you start to breathe in through your mouth. It comes out fast. If the timing isn't just right, the medicine doesn't make it into the lungs.

Medicines that come in MDIs:

Bronchodilators (like albuterol): These are reliever medicines that are used only to relieve symptoms of asthma like cough, wheeze or difficulty breathing. They should not be used unless there are symptoms of asthma present.

Inhaled steroids (like Flovent®, Qvar®, Symbicort ® or Advair®): These are prevention medicines that are used to prevent asthma episodes by decreasing the inflammation and swelling in the airways. They should be taken every day as directed by a doctor.



Before you use an inhaler:

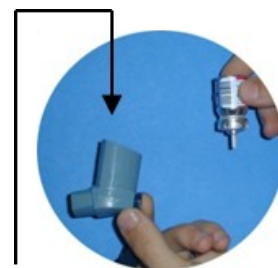
“Prime” your inhaler by squirting 4 puffs into the air before inhaling if it is a new inhaler, or it has been two weeks or more since last use,

*The HFA in the inhaler causes the opening to clog.

How to use an MDI

1. Remove the cap from the inhaler.
2. Shake the inhaler.
3. Breathe out as much air as you can.
4. Put the mouthpiece of the inhaler into your mouth (keep your tongue under the inhaler) and close your lips tight.
5. Trigger the inhaler at the very beginning of a long, slow, deep breath. The inhaler triggers when you press the canister down into the plastic holder.
6. Hold your breath for 10 seconds or to the count of 10.
7. If you are using a bronchodilator, wait 1-2 minutes between puffs.
8. Repeat until you have taken the prescribed number of puffs.

Clean the plastic holder once a week by removing the canister from the holder and running warm water through it for 30 seconds. Twist the canister back into place after the holder has air dried.



Please call us if you have any questions about how to use your inhaler.

University of Florida
Pediatric Pulmonary Division
352-273-8380 M-F 8am-5pm
352-265-0111 after hours
Page a pediatric pulmonologist