How to Use Your Inhaler With a Spacer Device
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Other words for inhaler include ‘puffer’ or metered dose inhaler (MDI). This pamphlet will explain how to take care of your MDI and spacer device and two ways you can use it. These two ways are ‘Method 1’ and ‘Method 2 - Rebreathing Method’.

Taking care of your spacer device

• Once a week, put all the parts of your device in a basin (or large bowl) of warm water with a mild dish soap. Rinse in a basin of clear water using a gentle motion. Let all parts air dry completely.
• **Do not put the parts back together** until the chamber is completely dry.
• **Do not** run tap water through the spacer device.
• **Do not** use a cloth or brush to clean inside the spacer device.
• **Do not** put it in the dishwasher.
Some drug plans cover the cost of a spacer device. You can buy a spacer device at most drug stores with or without a prescription. Prices vary, so check around before buying it. The Nova Scotia Pharmacare program pays for one spacer device per year.

**Parts of the spacer device**

- **Mouthpiece**
- **Cap**
- **Flap valve**
- **Opening for inhaler mouthpiece**
- **Aerosol holding chamber**
- **Small slots**
- **Rubber ring**
Cleaning your MDI

To clean your MDI, follow the instructions that came with it. For most MDIs, the steps will be:

1. Pull out the metal canister.

2. Clean the plastic parts using mild soap and water. (Never wash the metal canister or put it in water.)

3. Let the plastic parts dry in the air. (For example, leave them out overnight.)

4. Put the MDI back together.

5. Test the MDI by releasing a puff into the air.
How to use your inhaler with a spacer device (Method 1)

1. Make sure that the metal canister is firmly inside the inhaler’s plastic cover shell.
2. Take the plastic caps off of the inhaler and spacer device.
3. Shake the inhaler vigorously (well).
4. Place the plastic mouthpiece of the inhaler into the opening of the spacer device.
5. Breathe out normally.
6. Put the mouthpiece of the spacer device into your mouth and seal your lips around it.
7. Press the inhaler to spray the drug into the chamber.
8. Take a slow deep breath (over 5 seconds) and hold your breath for as long as you can (10 seconds, if possible). Note: Some spacer devices have a whistle.
which tells you that you are breathing in too fast. If you are using the device properly, you should NOT hear the whistle.

9. Remove the spacer device from your mouth and breathe out.

10. Wait 1 minute between each puff. Take only 1 puff at a time. Shake the inhaler again before the next puff and repeat steps 4-9.

11. Rinse out your mouth with water after using Flovent® or other inhaled steroids.

12. Replace the caps when not in use.

How to use your inhaler with the spacer device (Method 2) (Rebreathing Method)

Use this method if you can’t hold your breath or you can’t take slow deep breaths.

1. Make sure that the metal canister of the inhaler is firmly inside the plastic cover shell.

2. Take the plastic caps off of the inhaler and spacer device.

3. Shake the inhaler vigorously.
4. Place the plastic mouthpiece of the inhaler into the opening of the spacer device.

5. Put the mouthpiece of the spacer device into your mouth and seal your lips around it.

6. Breathe normally through the spacer device.

7. Press the inhaler and breathe normally through the spacer device for 4-5 breaths. (Do not take the device out of your mouth while breathing.)

8. Wait 1 minute between each puff. Take only 1 puff at a time. Shake the inhaler again before the next puff and repeat steps 4-8.

9. Rinse out your mouth after using Flovent® or other inhaled steroids (preventer).

10. Replace the caps when not in use.

Note: If you need 2 hands to press the medication canister, do so first. Then place the mouthpiece of the spacer up to your mouth and breathe in the medication using Method 1 or 2.
Medication Tips

• Know when to use the **preventer** and when to use the **reliever/rescue** inhaler.

• After using a **preventer** inhaler, rinse your mouth with water, gargle, and spit out. **Do not swallow.**

• Carry your reliever inhaler with you at all times.

• In cold weather, carry your inhaler in a pocket close to your body.

Date: ___________________________ YYYY / MM / DD

Your inhalers are:

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of puffs</th>
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Examples of puffers used with a spacer device

Reliever/rescue inhaler (short-acting bronchodilator)
› Airomir® (salbutamol)
› Atrovent®
› Ventolin® (salbutamol)

Long-acting bronchodilator with anti-inflammatory
› Advair®
› Zenhale®

Preventer inhaler (anti-inflammatory)
› Alvesco®
› Flovent®
› Qvar®

What are your questions? Please ask. We are here to help you.
Important reminders about MDIs

• Always follow the instructions that come with your MDI.

• Keep your reliever MDI somewhere where you can get it quickly if you need it, but out of children’s reach.

• Show your doctor, pharmacist, or asthma educator how you’re using your metered-dose inhaler and spacer device.

• You may or may not feel or taste the fine spray from the spacer device when taken properly. You are still getting your medication.

• Store your MDI at room temperature. If it gets cold, warm it using only your hands.

• Never puncture or break the canister, or try to warm it using anything except your hands.

• When you begin using an MDI, write the start date on the canister.

• Check the expiry date on the MDI before you use it.

• If you’re having trouble using your MDI, ask your doctor or pharmacist for tips or to recommend another device.

• **Do you think your MDI is empty? Do not float the canister in water. Shake it – if it feels light or you do not feel liquid moving, it is empty and needs to be replaced. Some devices have counters and “0” means it is empty.**
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