

# Asthma Medication Delivery Devices Aerosol Inhalers (Puffers)



## How are asthma medications taken?

Asthma medications can be inhaled (breathed in) or taken orally (swallowed). Most people use inhaled asthma medication because:

- Medication goes directly to the lungs.
- Smaller doses can be given therefore fewer side effects are experienced.

Inhalers need to be used correctly to ensure maximum benefits are achieved. This means that:

- Asthma improves more rapidly.
- Better control is maintained.
- Less medication is needed.
- Fewer side effects are experienced.

There are two types of inhalers:

1. Aerosol inhaler (puffer)
2. Dry powder inhaler

## This pamphlet is about aerosol inhalers (puffers).

### Important Points

- **The aim of delivery devices is to get the maximum amount of medication into your lungs with minimum side effects.**
- **Know how to care for and clean your inhalers and other devices.**
- **Always check the amount of medication left in your device.**
- **Use a spacer with a puffer to minimise side effects and deliver more medication to the lungs.**

**These inhalers use an aerosol canister to produce a fine mist of medication. There are two types:**

- 1.1 **Puffers - press and breathe**
- 1.2 **Autohalers - breath activated**

### 1.1 Puffers

#### Using a puffer correctly:

1. Remove the cover from the puffer mouthpiece.
2. Hold the puffer upright and shake vigorously.
3. Breathe out.
4. Tilt the chin up.
5. Put the puffer mouthpiece in your mouth and create a seal with your lips.
6. Start to breathe in through your mouth, then fire one puff of medication and continue to breathe in.
7. Hold your breath for 10 seconds.
8. Breathe out through your nose.

Puffers require good coordination, so it is important to press down on the canister and breathe in at the same time. More medication gets into the lungs when a puffer is used with a spacer device.

#### Cleaning a puffer correctly:

Check the consumer product information leaflet included in the pack for information on care and cleaning of your puffer.



## Spacers

It is recommended that all puffers are used in conjunction with a spacer. A spacer is a special device shaped like a clear plastic football or tube. Aerosol inhaler medications are sprayed into this device and then inhaled through a facemask or mouthpiece.

#### Using a spacer correctly:

1. If needed, assemble the spacer.
2. Remove the cap from the puffer and shake the puffer well.
3. Attach the puffer to the end of the spacer.
4. Place the mouthpiece of the spacer in your mouth and close your lips around it. If using a spacer with a facemask, place the facemask over the mouth and nose to ensure a good seal.
5. Press down on the puffer canister once to release the medication into the spacer.
6. Breathe in and out normally for about 4-5 breaths, or breathe in for 5 seconds, hold for 10 seconds and breathe out.
7. To take more medication, shake the puffer and repeat steps 3-6.

#### Cleaning a spacer correctly:

About once every two weeks, the spacer should be washed in clean warm soapy water and allowed to drip dry. Do not rinse or wipe dry.

#### Using a spacer helps control asthma because:

- There are fewer side effects from the medication.
- It is easier to use as it requires less coordination than an inhaler alone.
- More medication is inhaled.

Spacers come in many shapes and sizes. Your choice will depend on medication type, your age and ability. Children under 3-4 years of age will need a small volume spacer with a facemask. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or local Asthma Foundation for information.

## 1.2 Autohalers

Autohalers are breath-activated so the problem of coordination is avoided.

#### Using an Autohaler correctly:

1. Remove the cover from the Autohaler mouthpiece.
2. Hold the Autohaler in an upright position without blocking the vents at the base.
3. Lift the grey lever up at the top and shake the device vigorously.
4. Breathe out.
5. Tilt the chin up.
6. Put the mouthpiece in your mouth, closing your lips firmly around it.
7. Breathe in through your mouth with a deep, steady breath for as long as you can (approximately 5 seconds). The Autohaler will fire a dose of medication automatically.
8. Hold your breath for 10 seconds.
9. Breathe out slowly through your nose.
10. Return the grey lever to its original position.

#### Cleaning an Autohaler correctly:

Wipe mouthpiece with a clean dry tissue

## Nebulisers

Nebulisers convert liquid medication into a fine mist that is inhaled through a mask or mouthpiece.

Most people **DO NOT** need to have a nebuliser at home.

Increased doses of medication given via an inhaler and spacer are just as effective as using a nebuliser. For more information talk to your doctor or local Asthma Foundation.

### The Asthma Foundation of Victoria

491-495 King Street  
WEST MELBOURNE 3003  
Ph: (03) 9326 7088  
Fax: (03) 9326 7055  
Email: [advice@asthma.org.au](mailto:advice@asthma.org.au)  
Website: [www.asthma.org.au](http://www.asthma.org.au)