

How to use paediatric spacers

1. Remove the cap from the mouthpiece of the inhaler and shake the inhaler vigorously.
2. If the inhaler has not been used for a week or more, or it is the first time the child has used the inhaler, spray it into the air before it is used to check that it is working.
3. Attach the mask to the mouthpiece of the spacer.
4. Insert the inhaler mouthpiece into the hole in the end of the spacer (the inhaler should fit snugly and without difficulty - see below).
5. Place the mask over the child's nose and mouth so that it makes a seal with the face.
6. Press down on the inhaler canister to spray one puff of medicine into the spacer.
7. Hold the mask in place and allow the child to breathe in and out slowly for five breaths.
8. If you need to give another dose, wait 30 seconds, shake the inhaler again then repeat steps 4 to 7.
9. Don't spray more than one puff at a time into the spacer. This makes the droplets in the mist stick together and to the sides of the spacer, so the child actually breathes in a smaller dose.
10. Using a mask and spacer with a baby can sometimes be tricky. Reassure the baby by cradling them in your arms or on your knee. Gently stroke the baby's face with the mask so that they get used to it. Talk to the baby and smile - the baby will sense if you are anxious. You can hold the mask over the baby's nose and mouth to give them a dose while they are sleeping, and babies will also breathe in the medicine while they are crying.

Other useful advice

- Your spacer should be cleaned once a month in warm soapy water to prevent build up of medicine residue on the inside. It should be left to drip dry rather than dried with a cloth. Drying with a cloth, or cleaning the spacer more frequently than every month, can cause static to build up on the inside of the spacer, which can impair its performance.
- Spacers should be replaced every 6 to 12 months.
- You can check your inhaler technique with your doctor, practice nurse or pharmacist.
- If you have difficulty pressing the inhaler canister down, you can get a device called a Haleraid, which makes the inhaler easier to use.
- If you can't get to grips with an MDI and spacer, there are several other types of inhaler devices on the market (eg Autohalers, Accuhalers, Diskhalers). You may find some of these easier to use, so talk to your doctor, practice nurse or pharmacist about what is most suitable for you or your child.
- Always read the printed label and use your medicines as directed by your doctor or pharmacist.
- If you forget to take a dose of your inhaler, take the dose as soon as you remember, and then go on as before.

- Inform your doctor or pharmacist if you accidentally take more than you were supposed to.
- Don't give your medicines to anyone else to use, even if they have the same symptoms as you. They may be harmful to other people.
- Always keep medicines out of the reach of children.