



Breathing Easier

A Special Newsletter for MVP Health Care® Members

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Inhaled Asthma Medicines— Different Delivery Methods Explained

When you use inhaled asthma medicine, you usually use a device that delivers the medicine directly to your lungs. Different types of delivery systems are available, and one type may be more suitable for certain people, age groups, or medicine than another. The following describes how different asthma medicines can be delivered.



Metered-Dose Inhaler (MDI) Method

The MDI method is used by adults and children with Beta2-agonists, Corticosteroids, and Anticholinergics.

What to Think About Using the MDI Method

- Doctors recommend the use of a spacer with an MDI. The spacer is attached to the MDI. A spacer may deliver the medicine to your child's lungs better than an inhaler alone and, for many people, is easier to use than an MDI alone. Using a spacer with inhaled corticosteroid medicine can help reduce their side effects and result in less use of oral corticosteroid medicine.
- A spacer is recommended for children age five and older.
- A spacer and a face mask are recommended for children younger than five years of age.
- Using a spacer with an MDI may be just as effective as and less expensive than a nebulizer and can reduce the risk of an overdose.
- If you don't use a spacer, you need to trigger a puff of medicine and inhale at the same time.

Dry Powder Inhaler (DPI) Method

The MDI method is used by adults and children four years of age and older, and with Beta2-agonists and Corticosteroids.

What to Think About Using the DPI Method

- How well it works may depend on how well you breathe in.

- Your doctor determines the amount of medicine you use based on how much air you can breathe in. It also may be different than the amount used in some MDIs.
- DPIs may be easy to use, but they may be difficult to use during an asthma attack because you need to be able to breathe well to get the best effect.

Nebulizer (DPI) Method

The nebulizer method is used by any age that cannot use an MDI with a spacer, and with Beta2-agonists, Cromolyn, and Anticholinergics.

What to Think About Using the Nebulizer Method

- A nebulizer uses a face mask or mouthpiece to deliver the medicine.
- The medicine can be given over a long period of time.
- Nebulizers may be helpful for those who are ill, have serious difficulty breathing, or have trouble using an inhaler—especially infants, very young children, and older adults.
- A nebulizer is not very precise in delivering medicine, and there is a risk of getting too much medicine (overdose).
- A nebulizer needs electricity to turn the medicine into a fine mist. Some nebulizers have a large compressor that does this, other ones are portable and come with batteries.

Overuse of Quick-Relief Medicines

Medicines for quick relief of the narrowed bronchial tubes caused by asthma include short-acting beta2-agonists. These medicines relieve sudden increases of symptoms (asthma attacks) quickly, **but overuse may be harmful.**

Overuse of short-acting beta2-agonists has been associated with worsening asthma and increased risk of death¹. People who have severe asthma usually are the ones at greatest risk for illness and death from asthma. They may be taking higher doses of short-acting beta2-agonists to control their symptoms instead of increasing the use of anti-inflammatory medicine such as inhaled corticosteroids.

People who overuse short-acting beta2-agonists may feel their asthma is under control when, in fact, inflammation in the airways is becoming worse, putting them in danger of a severe, life-threatening attack (status asthmaticus).

Overuse:

- May delay medical care and increase your chances of having a severe asthma attack that can be life-threatening.
- Can decrease the future effectiveness of these medicines.
- Treats the early narrowing of bronchial tubes without treating long-term inflammation.

In general, you may need more long-term treatment if you are using short-acting beta2-agonists on more than two days a week (except before exercise). Talk to your doctor if you are using your quick-relief medicine this often. Frequent use of quick-relief medicines may mean that your symptoms and inflammation are not well controlled.

1. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (2007). Expert Panel Report 3: Guidelines for the diagnosis and management of asthma.

MVP has online resources available 24 hours a day to help you take charge of your health.

Make informed decisions about your health by using the Healthwise® Knowledgebase—our online Health Encyclopedia. Curious about the medications you take every day? Visit mvphealthcare.com and select *Members*, then *Health & Wellness*. The MVP Healthwise Knowledgebase is your one-stop resource for the latest health information.



MVP Health Care offers a health management program for members living with asthma. For more information or to see if you qualify, call **1-866-942-7966**. MVP's program is based on a collaborative guideline (including the NYSDOH, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, professional organizations, MVP and other health plans from across the state) derived from the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Third Expert Report Clinical Guideline for the Diagnosis, Evaluation, and Management of Adults and Children with Asthma.

Information in this newsletter does not constitute medical advice. If you have questions about your health, talk to your doctor.

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Contact Us

For more information, call

1-866-942-7966

Monday–Friday, 8:30 am–5:00 pm

TTY: **1-800-662-1220**

We value your opinion.

Please fill out a brief, anonymous survey at mvplistsens.com. We will use this information to create a better experience for all of our members. All responses are 100% confidential. The survey only takes a few minutes to complete.



Quick Tips for Being Prepared to Talk to Your Doctor

Patients who have good relationships with their doctors are more satisfied with their care and have better results. Here are some tips to help you and your doctor become better partners in improving your health care:

- Write down your questions before your visit. List the most important ones first to make sure they get asked and answered.
- Bring a “health history” list with you, and keep it up to date.
- Always bring any medications you are taking, including over-the-counter, or a list of those medications (include when and how often you take them) and what strength.
- You might want to bring someone along to help you ask questions and remember the answers.
- Find more information and printable forms at mvphhealthcare.com.

Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)



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