How to use a spacer device

Information for you

Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nhsaaa
Follow us on Twitter @NHSaaa

Visit our website: www.nhsaaa.net
All our publications are available in other formats
A spacer is a plastic tube that acts as a holding chamber. It is attached to a metered dose inhaler to help make the inhaler easier to take. It also helps to make sure that the medication in the inhaler gets into the lungs where it is needed.

Spacers can also help to prevent some side-effects from the inhaler, such as coughing, sore mouth or hoarse voice.

At one end of the spacer there is a mouthpiece that you breathe through and at the other end there is a hole for the inhaler mouthpiece to fit into.

Using a spacer device can help if you have difficulty breathing in and pressing the inhaler at the same time.

Spacers can also be used to take extra puffs of reliever inhalers in an emergency - for example, during an asthma attack or if your nebuliser breaks down.

There are two main types of spacer:

• large volume such as Volumatic ®

• small volume such as Aerochamber ® or Able Spacer ®

Both work in the same way. You should follow the instructions on the pages overleaf.
Single breath technique

1. Remove the mouthpiece cover from your inhaler. Shake the inhaler well, and then insert the mouthpiece into the hole at the back of your spacer.

2. Put the mouthpiece of the spacer in your mouth making a good seal with your lips.

3. Press the inhaler canister down once, and then breathe in slowly and deeply through the mouthpiece of the spacer. If you hear a whistling sound you are breathing in too quickly. Try to slow down your breathing.

4. Hold your breath for as long as it is comfortable. You should aim for about 10 seconds. Breathe out through the mouthpiece.

5. Remove the spacer from your mouth.

6. If you need to take a second puff, repeat steps two to five.

7. Remove the inhaler from the spacer and put the mouthpiece cover back on the inhaler to keep out dust and fluff.

**Remember:** Don’t be tempted to spray two puffs of inhaler into the spacer at once. You will not get the correct dose of medication.
Multiple breath technique

1. Remove the mouthpiece cover from your inhaler. Shake the inhaler well, and then insert the mouthpiece into the hole at the back of your spacer.

2. Put the mouthpiece of the spacer in your mouth making a good seal with your lips.

3. Start breathing in and out slowly and gently through the mouthpiece of the spacer. If you hear a whistling sound you are breathing in too quickly. Try to slow down your breathing.

4. Press the inhaler canister down once and continue to breathe in and out slowly through the mouthpiece of the spacer for about four of five breaths. Some spacers will make a clicking noise when you breathe in and out. This is normal.

5. Remove the spacer from your mouth.

6. If you need to take a second puff, repeat steps two to five.

7. Remove the inhaler from the spacer and put the mouthpiece cover back on the inhaler to keep out dust and fluff.
Remember: Don’t be tempted to spray two puffs of inhaler into the spacer at once. You will not get the correct dose of medication.

Emergency treatment

Please note this is only for use with reliever inhalers during an emergency, such as an asthma attack or nebuliser breakdown.

1. Remove the mouthpiece cover from your inhaler. Shake the inhaler well, and then insert the mouthpiece into the hole at the back of your spacer.

2. Put the mouthpiece of the spacer in your mouth making a good seal with your lips.

3. Start breathing in and out through the mouthpiece of the spacer. If you hear a whistling sound you are breathing in too quickly. Try to slow down your breathing.

4. Press the inhaler canister down once and continue to breathe in and out slowly through the mouthpiece of the spacer for about four of five breaths. Some spacers will make a clicking noise when you breathe in and out. This is normal.
5. Press the inhaler canister down again approximately every 30 seconds until you have taken 15 to 20 puffs of the inhaler over 10 minutes.

Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist can give you more information about what to do if you have an asthma attack and when to seek medical help.

Looking after your spacer

Clean your spacer once a month. Read the information leaflet with your spacer to find out how to take it apart for washing.

Wash the spacer in warm soapy water and allow to drip dry at room temperature. Drying with a cloth can cause static electricity to build up inside the spacer making it less effective.

Some manufacturers advise that leaving the soap on the spacer after washing can also reduce the static electricity. However, you should always rinse the mouthpiece.

Re-assemble the spacer when it is completely dry.

Most spacers should be replaced every six months.
Spacers are available on prescription.

Always remember to read the leaflet that comes with your spacer for more specific instructions on how to look after it.

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for advice if you are unsure of how to use or look after your spacer.
All of our publications are available in different languages, larger print, braille (English only), audio tape or another format of your choice.

Wszystkie nasze publikacje są dostępne w różnych językach, dużym drukiem, brajlem (tylko w wersji angielskiej), na taśmie dźwiękowej lub w innym formacie Twojego wyboru.

我們所有的印刷品均有不同語言版本、大字體版本、盲文（僅有英文）、錄音帶版本或你想要的另外形式供選擇。

Tha gach sgrìobhainn againn rim faotainn ann an diofar chànanan, clò nas motha, Braille (Beurla a-mhàin), teip clastinn no rìochd eile a tha sibh airson a thaghadh.

If you would like to comment on any issues raised by this document, please complete this form and return it to: Communications Department, 28 Lister Street, University Hospital Crosshouse, Crosshouse KA2 0BB. You can also email us at: comms@aaaht.scot.nhs.uk or comms@aapct.scot.nhs.uk. If you provide your contact details, we will acknowledge your comments and pass them to the appropriate departments for a response.

Name
______________________________________________________
Address
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
Comment
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

Last reviewed: December 2012
Leaflet reference: MIS11-249-GD