

Asthma medications come in many forms. Some are pills, some syrup, some are inhaled through either an MDI, (Metered Dose Inhaler – liquid medication propelled with a gas), or DPI (Dry Powder Inhaler) and others are liquids used in inhalation machines called nebulizers. Being in control of asthma is to be “in compliance” with your medication plan, meaning not only using the right medications for your asthma symptoms but also using this medication correctly as prescribed. Inhalers make it possible to absorb asthma medications directly into the airways and to stop asthma symptoms quickly. Inhalation is a difficult technique but with practice, anyone can do it correctly.

Using an MDI without a spacer: There is a choice of an ‘open mouth’ or ‘closed mouth’ technique. Ask your healthcare provider which is best for you but the basic steps are the same for both:

1. **prime** the MDI canister if new or it hasn't been used in several weeks (follow manufacturer's instructions - depress 2-3 sprays or more as directions state, pointing the spray away from the face when priming)
2. remove the cap from the holding chamber's mouthpiece and hold the inhaler upright (check for dust or lint)
3. **shake** the inhaler to mix the medication with the propellant gas
4. tilt head back slightly and breathe out completely
5. if using the ‘**open mouth**’ method, place the inhaler about 2 fingers' width away from your lips and opened mouth then press down once on the canister to spray the medication into the air and breathe in as the medication is dispensed into the air
6. if using the ‘**closed mouth**’ method, place your lips tightly around the mouthpiece then press down once on the canister to expel the medication into your mouth and inhale slowly – 3-5 seconds
7. with either method, once inhaled, **hold your breath** 5 to 10 seconds (count 1001, 1002, 1003, etc.)
8. **exhale** slowly through your nose
9. if two puffs or sprays are prescribed, wait at least 30 seconds, then repeat steps 4-8
10. **rinse** your mouth with water (spit the water out, never swallow) or brush your teeth to eliminate a bad taste and help prevent oral thrush. This is especially recommended if the medication is a corticosteroid



Using an “Open Mouth” technique

Using a “Closed Mouth” technique



TIPS:

- Most MDI's don't have a counter to tell you when they're almost empty; to keep track of the number of doses, puffs or sprays (all mean the same) left so you'll know when to refill, ask your pharmacist how many doses your new canister holds. If the canister holds 60 sprays and you are prescribed 2 sprays or puffs a day, then your canister will last almost 30 days (don't forget the priming process which uses a couple sprays). To calculate, divide the number of prescribed sprays or puffs used daily into the total number available in a new canister which tells you how many days it should last. Mark your calendar when you first use the MDI and calculate when you will need a refill.
- It's very important to **clean your MDI**, especially the new HFA propelled inhalers. These have a tendency to gum up with medication residue over time. If you see white powder or other residue around the tiny medication spray hole then it is time to clean the device. **To clean**, remove the medication canister from the L-shaped plastic mouth piece, rinse only the mouth piece in warm water and then dry completely before replacing the canister. **Never get the medication canister itself wet!** It is still recommended that children use a spacer with the new inhalers to channel the medication into their lungs rather than letting medication escape into the air.