

How to Use Your Spacer Device

Why use a spacer device?

Using a spacer device (either a spacer or holding chamber) with your metered dose inhaler (“MDI”) can help reduce the amount of drug that sticks to the back of your throat. This can help you avoid hoarseness and a yeast infection in your throat called “thrush.” For this reason, spacers are sometimes recommended for use with inhaled corticosteroids, like *Aerobid*, *Flovent HFA*, etc. A valved holding chamber (“VHC”) can help if you have trouble inhaling and pressing down your inhaler at the same time. VHCs prevent your exhaled breath from entering the chamber. Children, or anyone who has difficulty using an MDI, can use a facemask with a spacer device.

Step-by-step instructions for using a spacer device

1. Remove the cap from your MDI. Check the mouthpiece for dust, lint, or objects. Check your spacer device for foreign objects as well.
2. Shake your MDI several times.
3. Insert your MDI into your spacer or VHC. Some devices will require you to insert just the canister from your MDI. Others will allow you to insert the mouthpiece of the MDI into the device. (The type of spacer devices that allow you to insert just the canister typically cannot be used with more than one MDI).
4. Breathe out normally.
5. Place the mouthpiece of the device in your mouth and form a tight seal around it with your lips. (Or if you’re using a mask, place the mask on the face, covering the mouth and nose with a good seal).
6. Press down on the MDI only once so that the medicine from the MDI goes into the spacer device. (Do not spray more than one puff of medication into the spacer at a time).
7. Take a slow, deep breath. Some devices will make a whistling sound if you breathe in too quickly. If you hear the whistle, keep breathing but slow down. If you’re using a facemask, breathe in and out three to six times.
8. Remove the mouthpiece of the device from your mouth. Try to hold your breath, if you can, for ten seconds.
9. If you use a bronchodilator (like *ProAir HFA*, *Ventolin HFA*, *Xopenex HFA*, etc), wait for one minute before repeating. Otherwise, there is no need to wait between puffs.
10. If you use a corticosteroid (like *Aerobid*, *Flovent HFA*, etc), rinse your mouth with water after you are completely finished. If a facemask is used, wash the area around the mouth to remove any medication and prevent irritation to the skin.

How should I care for my spacer device?

Clean your spacer device according to the instructions from the manufacturer. Make sure the device is dry before you use it for the next dose.

If you’re using a spacer device that’s not made of an anti-static plastic or metal, you’ll need to soak it for about 20 minutes each month in warm water with a couple drops of dishwashing detergent. This is to prevent static build-up on the plastic that can reduce the amount of drug you get from your inhaler. In addition, do not store your spacer device in a plastic bag. Static charge is added each time the device is placed in the bag or removed from the bag.

To get the best results from your spacer device, have your healthcare provider demonstrate how to use it correctly.