

## Children's Service

# Inhaler Technique - using a spacer

This leaflet should be read along with the leaflet provided in your spacer's box. Your nurse will teach you the technique described below. If you have any concerns, please ask your nurse before discharge.

### Why use a spacer?

Spacers are important as they help get the medicine in to your child's lungs more effectively than using the inhaler on its own.

They stop the medicine from sticking to the back of the mouth, reducing the risk of thrush (a fungal infection that can occur in the mouth) and sores.

This is particularly important when using a preventer inhaler, when you should also wipe your child's mouth afterwards or get them to rinse with water or brush their teeth.

When giving an inhaler to your child via a spacer, it is first important to choose whether they can take it via the mouth piece directly, or with a facemask.

As a general rule, using the face mask attachment is appropriate up to the age of three, after which children can usually be taught how to use the mouthpiece alone.



**Using inhaler with spacer**



**Volumatic spacer with face mask**

Images kindly provided by Asthma UK.

### **Follow these steps when giving your baby or young child's inhaler:**

- Put the spacer device together - follow the instructions that come with it.
- For a young child, attach the mask to the spacer mouth piece. If your child can hold the spacer mouthpiece in their mouth and hold it firmly between their lips and create a good seal, you may not need to use the mask.
- Take the cap off the inhaler, and make sure that the mouth piece is clean.
- Hold the inhaler upright. Place your thumb on the bottom of the inhaler and your first finger on the top. Then shake the inhaler several times up and down.
- Position your child comfortably; either securely on your lap, sitting or standing up.
- **With a mask** - place the mask over your child's mouth and nose, ensuring a good seal with the skin around the mouth. Reassure your child during this step, as they may be distressed.
- **Without a mask** - place the mouthpiece into your child's mouth, ensuring they make a good seal with their lips.
- Press down once on the aerosol canister with the first finger. This releases one puff into the spacer. Only put one puff of medicine into the spacer at a time.
- Hold the mask in place and encourage your child to take five deep and slow breaths in and out (called tidal breathing), or for at least 10 seconds.  
**It is important not to rush this step.**
- If your child cannot make the valve click when breathing, tilt the device back at a 45 degree angle to keep the valve open. You can position your child lying down and may consider giving it while your child is asleep if possible without causing upset.
- If more than one dose/puff is required, wait for one minute then repeat the previous steps. Shake the inhaler between puffs to ensure that the correct amount of medicine is delivered.
- Your child should rinse their mouth out thoroughly with water or clean their teeth.

## Patient Information

### **Cleaning the inhaler and spacer**

The spacer device should be cleaned once a month by washing in mild detergent and then allowed to dry in air without rinsing. The mouthpiece should be wiped clean of detergent before use.

Store the spacer so that it will not become scratched or damaged. Spacer devices should be replaced every 12 months or sooner if it appears worn or damaged.

Aerosol inhalers (such as salbutamol) should be cleaned every week.

Replacement spacers and further inhalers can be obtained from your GP if needed.

### **Tips for using a spacer and mask with babies and young children**

Let your child play with the spacer and/or mask. Add stickers and play a 'counting game', counting aloud as your child takes a breath.

Reassure your child by pretending to take the medicine yourself or pretend to give it to a favourite toy.

Cuddle your child on your knee or cradle them in your arms. Gently tuck their arms out of the way with one hand if they try to knock the mask away.

Be positive and smile! Your child will be aware if you are anxious.

Distraction with music or videos can also be useful. Praise your child when they use their spacer correctly.

Gently stroke your baby's cheek with the mask so that they get used to the feel of it.

Have a routine – set a time of day to give regular medicine (such as before brushing teeth).

If you find it difficult to use the spacer with very young children, don't worry – you're not alone! But do keep trying. Getting your child to take inhaled medicine is the most important way to treat wheezy and asthma symptoms.

Speak to your GP, asthma nurse, or pharmacist if you have any concerns.

## Patient Information

### **Asthma UK information and inhaler technique videos**

<http://www.asthma.org.uk/knowledge-bank-treatment-and-medicines-using-your-inhalers>

### **Medicines for Children information leaflet**

<https://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk/medicines/salbutamol-inhaler-for-asthma-and-wheeze>

### **Further Information**

**If you have any other questions or need further information, please call the Children's Department on 024 7696 6921.**



The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please ask or contact 024 7696 7215 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email [feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk](mailto:feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk)

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