

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Rescue Inhaler



Why are you getting this medication?

The pharmacist prescribed a rescue inhaler or nebulizer solution because you have asthma and needed quick relief or a refill of the medication. This medication, (albuterol or levalbuterol) works within minutes to open your airways when you feel short of breath, wheezy, or tight in the chest. It is for quick relief, not for everyday control.

How to use your inhaler

1. Take off the cap and shake the inhaler for about 5 seconds.
2. If it is new or hasn't been used in a while, it may need to be primed before using. Spray a few test puffs into the air away from your face if priming is needed. Check the instructions that came with your inhaler for when to prime your inhaler.
3. Breathe out all the way, pointing away from the inhaler.
4. Put the mouthpiece in your mouth and close your lips tightly around it.
5. As you start to breathe in slowly, press down on the canister once. Keep breathing in, slow and deep.
6. Take the inhaler out of your mouth, hold your breath for about 10 seconds, then breathe out.
7. For a second puff, wait 1 minute, shake again, and repeat. You will not need to prime before the second puff.

Keep using your daily controller inhaler

A rescue inhaler does not fix the swelling in your airways that causes asthma. That is the job of your controller medication, such as an inhaled steroid. Keep taking your controller every day, even if you feel fine. Skipping it is one of the most common reasons asthma gets worse.

If you need your rescue inhaler more than 2 days a week (not counting use before exercise), your asthma may not be well controlled. Talk or schedule an appointment with your primary care provider if this is the case.

The pharmacist can also prescribe a spacer

A spacer is a tube that attaches to your inhaler. It helps more of the medication reach your lungs instead of getting stuck in your mouth and throat, and it makes it easier to use your inhaler correctly. Ask your pharmacist if a spacer would be appropriate and how to use the spacer if one is provided.

If you use a nebulizer

Put one vial of medication into the cup, connect it to the machine, and breathe slowly through the mouthpiece or mask until the mist stops, about 10 to 15 minutes. Do not mix multiple nebulizer solutions in the cup. Rinse the nebulizer parts and let them air dry after each use. Follow the directions on your prescription label.

NDSU

CENTER FOR
COLLABORATION AND
ADVANCEMENT IN PHARMACY

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; American Lung Association; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Rescue Inhaler



When to contact a healthcare provider?

This pharmacy service is meant to help in the short term, such as when you are traveling or waiting on a refill. It does not replace regular asthma care. Set up a visit with your primary care provider so they can check how your asthma is doing, make sure your medications are still working well for you, and issue additional refills.

When to call the pharmacy?

- You are not sure how to use your inhaler, spacer, or nebulizer.
- You have side effects that bother you. A rescue inhaler can cause a fast or pounding heartbeat, shakiness, or feeling nervous. These are usually mild and pass, but call your pharmacy if they do not.

When it is an emergency: Use your inhaler and call 911 or go to the Emergency Department.

Get help right away if:

- Your inhaler is not helping, or the relief wears off quickly.
- Your symptoms come back within a few hours and you need to use your inhaler again.
- You are struggling to breathe, or cannot walk or talk without stopping for air.
- Your lips or fingernails turn blue or gray.
- Your chest stays tight and you feel like you cannot catch your breath.

Do not wait these symptoms out. Use your rescue inhaler and get help!

NDSU

CENTER FOR
COLLABORATION AND
ADVANCEMENT IN PHARMACY

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; American Lung Association; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute