

Asthma and COPD: How to use a nebulizer

What is a nebulizer?

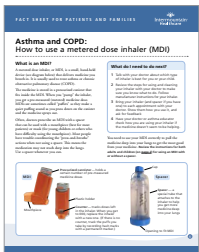
A **nebulizer** [NEB-yoo-lie-zer] is a device that turns liquid medicine into a fine mist that you can easily breathe into your lungs. Doctors often prescribe nebulizers for children and for people who have trouble breathing in deeply enough to use an inhaler. For some people and some medicines, nebulizers are the best way to take inhaled medicines. This may be because they cannot take a deep breath or hold their breath for 3 seconds.

How else can I get this medicine?

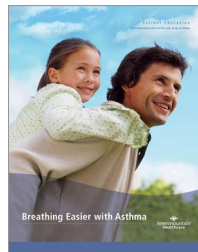
You might also use an inhaler—a portable, hand-held tool—to take a lung medicine. To learn more about how to use an inhaler, ask your healthcare provider for these other Intermountain patient education materials:

What do I need to do next?

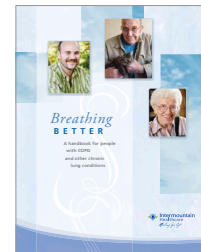
- 1 Learn how to use and maintain your nebulizer (see [page 2](#)).
- 2 Ask your doctor for information about using an inhaler along with your nebulizer.
- 3 If you are a parent or caregiver of a child who will need to use a nebulizer, learn tips for helping small children get the medicine they need (see [page 2](#)).



Asthma: How to Use a Metered Dose Inhaler

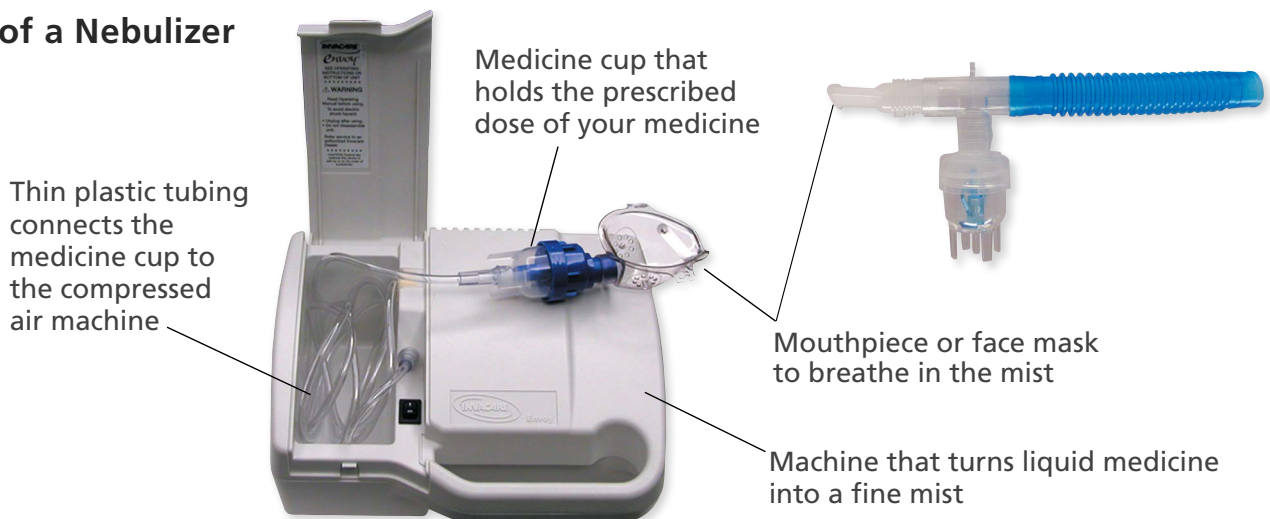


Breathing Easier with Asthma



Breathing Better: A handbook for people with COPD and other chronic lung conditions

Parts of a Nebulizer



How do I use a nebulizer

Your doctor or respiratory therapist will show you how to use your nebulizer. Use these general instructions for reference at home:

- 1 Fill the medicine cup with the prescribed amount of medicine.
- 2 Connect the tubing.
- 3 Screw the mouthpiece (or facemask) on top of the medicine cup.
- 4 Sit up straight, and hold the medicine cup upright. Put the mouthpiece in your mouth (or place the mask over your mouth).
- 5 Turn the machine on.
- 6 Breathe deeply and slowly through your mouth until the mist stops. It is normal for a small amount of liquid to be left in the cup.



Note: Tap the medicine cup if the contents begin to make unusual noises during your treatment.

How do I clean and maintain a nebulizer?

The parts of the nebulizer need regular cleaning (with mild soap and warm water) as well as inspection. Follow the instructions that come with your nebulizer. (Most manufacturers recommend cleaning some of the parts after each use.) Also, replace parts as often as the manufacturer recommends—or earlier, if you notice a problem. (Sometimes the company that provides your equipment will check your nebulizer for you.)

For parents and caregivers

Helping a child adjust to a nebulizer with a mask

Doctors often recommend that young children use nebulizers with masks. To help your child adjust to the mask:

- Invite the child to explore the mask. Let the child practice putting it on or pretend to use it on a doll or parent.
- When appropriate, encourage the child to help hold the mask during the treatment.
- If the child has difficulty holding still while using the mask, provide a small reward or distraction, such as holding a special toy.
- If the tips above don't work, you may need to gently hold the child while using the mask.



Persistence pays!

A child who resists the mask will eventually cooperate if you continue to give treatments regularly. So stay consistent. If your child senses that treatments are optional, they will probably continue to resist.

Blow-by technique — do not use!

“Blow-by” refers to the practice of directing the mist or “puff” from the nebulizer toward the mouth and nose of the person receiving the treatment.

As the name suggests, most of the medicine blows right by and never reaches the person's lungs. Even if the nebulizer or inhaler is placed ½-inch from the mouth and nose, most of the medicine is lost to the surrounding air.

Be sure to securely place the mouthpiece in your mouth (or mask over your face).

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