

## How to Use the Metered Dose Inhaler with a Spacer

### **INSTRUCTIONAL STEPS ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

#### Preparing the Metered Dose Inhaler (MDI)

- Put the inhaler together (as needed). Most do not require assembly.
- Inspect the spacer for foreign objects, if there is a valve; make sure it is intact and not damaged, torn, or missing.
- Remove the cap from the mouthpiece.
- Attach the inhaler to the spacer.

#### Using the Metered Dose Inhaler with a Spacer

- Shake the inhaler vigorously for several seconds.
- Prime the inhaler as needed and will vary depending on brand - "*priming*" is done to mix the medication with the propellant, to help prevent medication build-up and blockages, and ensures that the inhaler works properly by releasing a test spray into the air prior to use. *Refer to the manufacturer's insert included with the MDI.*
- Hold the inhaler upright with your index finger on top and thumb on the bottom, support the spacer with your other hand.
- Exhale fully and gently through your mouth.
- Position the spacer comfortably in your mouth, with your lips and teeth around the mouth piece.
- Press down on the inhaler.
- **Inhale slowly and deeply** for about 3 to 5 seconds as the medicine moves from the spacer into your lungs.
- Close your mouth; **hold your breath for at least 10 seconds**; and then exhale.
- Repeat dose(s) as ordered. **Be sure to shake the inhaler before each puff or pressing down on the inhaler.**
- **Wait 30 – 60 seconds** between doses - waiting between puffs allows the medication you breathed in to take effect by beginning to open your airways and give relief. With your lungs more relaxed and open, you will be able to breathe in the next puff of medication deeper to provide better relief of symptoms.
- **Wait at least 10 minutes when using two or more types of inhalers** (e.g. bronchodilators, anticholinergics, corticosteroids). Typically, **FIRST** use your bronchodilator (such as albuterol or xopenex) to open up or dilate the lungs, then use other long acting controller medications or combination medications such as inhaled steroid or non-steroid inhaled medications (such as pulmicort, flovent, Advair, Symbicort, Atrovent, or Intal, etc.).

## **Special Instructions**

- Breathe out fully before pressing down on your inhaler.
- Breathe in slowly and deeply.
- Inhale slowly through your mouth, not your nose when using a spacer or holding chamber.
- **Press down only once** when using your inhaler. **Wait at least 30 seconds to 1 minute between each puff.** This waiting between inhalations gives the previously inhaled medication "time to work" by dilating your lungs open and it gives time for you to "shake" or prepare your inhaler for another dose.
- The medication is colorless and typically odorless.
- **Clean your MDI often** (*read manufacturer's insert with product*). The propellant used today can cause blockages at the point where the medicine comes out of the inhaler. Cleaning is easy! Typically, remove the medicine canister from the holder and run warm or hot water through the holder to clear away any blockages. If you are unable to remove the medicine canister from the holder, use a Q-tip with isopropyl or rubbing alcohol to clean the opening where the medicine sprays out.
- Refill your inhaler medicine as needed; do not wait until the canister is empty. Most inhalers do not have a "counter" built in - otherwise record the amount of puffs used on a sheet of paper or daily journal - the average is 200 puffs per canister - read the manufacturer's insert included with your medication for more information or ask your pharmacist.
- When using a corticosteroid (steroid) inhaler or combined inhaled medications with steroids, be sure to **"rinse and spit"** after use to prevent mouth and throat irritation, or developing "thrush" (which is a growth of yeast on the tongue or throat) and other issues.
- Contact your pharmacist or doctor right away if your inhaler or spacer is lost or broken.
- Spacers or valved holding chambers can be used with most types of propellant based inhaled medications; clean spacer/holding chamber regularly

## **Caring for the Inhaler & Spacer**

Keep your inhaler and spacer clean. Wash the curved mouthpiece and the spacer in warm, soapy water at least once a week. Dry carefully with a clean, lint-free cloth. Keep the cap on the mouthpiece when not in use. Do not share your inhaler with your family or friends. Certain types of inhalers require special cleaning methods - refer to the packaging insert provided with your medicine to properly clean it.

Always have an extra spacer on hand if possible.