



Nebulizers and Inhalers

NEBULIZER



Overview

If you have a lung condition such as asthma or COPD, your doctor may decide to treat you with a medicine that you breathe into your lungs. You will inhale it with either a nebulizer or an inhaler device. These devices have some important differences.

Nebulizers

Nebulizers are small machines that turn liquid medicine into a mist. Nebulizers designed for home use plug into a wall outlet. Portable nebulizers are battery operated. To use a typical home nebulizer, you will fill a small cup with liquid medicine. This cup attaches to a mask that fits over your mouth and nose. A thin plastic tube connects the cup to the nebulizer machine. When the machine is turned on, compressed air flows through the tube and into the cup, vaporizing the liquid medicine. Breathe through the mask normally to inhale the vaporized medicine.

METERED DOSE INHALER



Metered Dose Inhaler (MDI)

Inhalers are smaller and more portable than nebulizers. There are many types of inhalers. A common type, called a metered dose inhaler, contains liquid medicine in a small canister. The canister is attached to a mouthpiece. You put the mouthpiece into your mouth and press the canister to release a spray of medicine. As you do this, you inhale deeply to draw the medicine into your lungs.

Dry Powder Inhaler (DPI)

Another type of inhaler, called a dry powder inhaler, uses powdered medicine instead of a spray. You load a dose of powder into the device, put the mouthpiece into your mouth and inhale quickly and deeply to draw the powdered medicine into your lungs.

DRY POWDER INHALER



Choosing the Right Device

Because inhalers require forceful, purposeful inhaling, they are not suitable for certain people (especially infants and young children). Your doctor will consider your condition and your specific needs to determine whether a nebulizer or an inhaler is right for you.