

Nebuliser use and care

What is a nebuliser

A nebuliser is a machine used to change liquid medication into a vapour that you can inhale. It works by pumping pressurised air through the liquid to form a fine mist, which can then be breathed in through a mask or mouthpiece.

Do you still need a nebuliser?

A nebuliser is no longer the recommended way for most people to take their asthma medications.

All the latest research shows that a puffer with spacer works just as well as a nebuliser for treating asthma symptoms, including during an asthma flare-up.

A puffer with spacer is also easier, faster and cheaper, is much more portable, and reduces the potential for side-effects.

If you still use a nebuliser for taking asthma medications – whether day-to-day or just when symptoms flare up – talk to your doctor about making the switch.

Choosing a nebuliser

It is important to choose a nebuliser that suits your needs. Ask your pharmacist, nurse or asthma educator about which nebuliser might be best for you.

Key things to consider are:

- Can you operate and clean the nebuliser easily? Look for one that is convenient for regular use.
- Is it easy to get new bowls, tubing and masks or mouthpieces? These need to be replaced regularly.
- Where will you be using the nebuliser? There are some portable nebulisers available but these may be less powerful or more expensive.

- What sort of power source can you use? There are battery operated pumps and 12-volt pumps that plug into a car cigarette lighter.
- What are the after-sales service arrangements? Your nebuliser will need to be serviced regularly.

Tips for using your nebuliser

Your pharmacist, nurse or asthma educator will be able to help you learn how to use your nebuliser.

- Most people can use the mouthpiece alone, but a mask can be attached if needed.
- Place your pump on a hard surface when using it – this allows smooth running and stops bits of lint and other materials entering the pump.
- A pump should nebulise 80% of the medication in the first 8 minutes, so for most people a standard dose will be all done within about 10 minutes.

Cleaning your nebuliser

Cleaning and maintaining your nebuliser well helps you get the right dose of medication each time and reduces your risk of getting an infection from the nebuliser.

Speak to your pharmacist about the best way to maintain and service your nebuliser. Make sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Most nebulisers will need the pump serviced and filters replaced regularly, usually every 6–12 months depending on the amount of use. Plus the bowl, tubing and mask/mouthpiece usually need to be replaced every 3 months.

Additional information

[Cochrane Systematic Review: Holding chambers \(spacers\) versus nebulisers for beta-agonist treatment of acute asthma.](#)