

Patient information from BMJ

Last published: Jul 10, 2020

Asthma in children: types of inhalers

Most asthma treatments for children are given using inhalers. There are different types of inhalers, and they deliver the medication in different ways.

One of the most common types, called a **metered-dose inhaler**, involves pressing down on a metal container to release a puff of medication, which your child breathes in through a mouthpiece.

Many children use a device called a **spacer** along with these inhalers. It is a large plastic container that attaches to the inhaler. The container has a one-way valve, so when a child presses the canister, a puff of drug is released and stored in the empty space in the container.

This allows the child to breathe in the medication through a mouthpiece in their own time, without having to coordinate their breath with pushing on the top of the inhaler.

Another common type of inhaler is the **dry powder inhaler**. For these inhalers, your child doesn't have to coordinate their breath with pushing on the top of the inhaler. This is because the medication is released when your child takes a deep, fast breath.

With all types of inhalers, it's important that children hold their breath for a count of 10 after inhaling a dose of medication. Your doctor or a nurse will make sure you and your child learn how to use your child's inhaler properly.

The patient information from *BMJ Best Practice* from which this leaflet is derived is regularly updated. The most recent version of Best Practice can be found at bestpractice.bmj.com. This information is intended for use by health professionals. It is not a substitute for medical advice. It is strongly recommended that you independently verify any interpretation of this material and, if you have a medical problem, see your doctor.

Please see BMJ's full terms of use at: bmj.com/company/legal-information. BMJ does not make any representations, conditions, warranties or guarantees, whether express or implied, that this material is accurate, complete, up-to-date or fit for any particular purposes.

© BMJ Publishing Group Ltd 2020. All rights reserved.

