



# NEBULIZERS

## for the Treatment of Asthma



### WHAT IS A NEBULIZER?

A nebulizer machine, or “breathing machine,” turns liquid asthma medicine into a mist. You then breathe in the medicine through a mask or mouthpiece. If your provider recommends that you use a nebulizer, it is important to know what your options are and how they work.

### WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF NEBULIZERS?

Nebulizers come in different models. A tabletop nebulizer is a larger model that needs to be plugged into an electrical outlet. A tabletop model is a good at-home option. Portable or handheld nebulizers run on batteries, and some can be plugged into a car outlet. Portable nebulizers fit into purses and backpacks and can be used anywhere.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING A NEBULIZER?

Nebulizers may be easier to use than some asthma inhalers. Inhalers come in many shapes and sizes. Each inhaler must be held and inhaled correctly. If the inhaler is not primed and breathed in the right way, all the medicine will not get into the lungs.

You do not need to prime a nebulizer or time when you inhale, like with an inhaler. Once the nebulizer is set up and ready to use, simply breathe in and out slowly. The soft mist will get deep into your lungs where it is needed most.

### HOW CAN I GET A NEBULIZER AND NEBULIZED MEDICINES?

A doctor can prescribe a nebulizer and the liquid medicine that goes into the nebulizer. If prescribed, your insurance company may cover the cost. You can order your nebulizer, tubing, and medicine cups (called a nebulizer kit) from a pharmacy or a durable medical equipment (DME) company. Nebulizers purchased without a prescription (online) may not meet the Food and Drug Administrations (FDA) standards. Work with your doctor and insurance company to find the nebulizer model that is covered by insurance and will work best for you. Most nebulizers will have parts that need to be replaced over time per the manufacturer’s instructions. Work with your insurance company to get replacement parts.

Make sure your Asthma Action Plan states when and how to use your nebulizer. To learn more about asthma medicines, visit [aafa.org/asthma-treatment](https://aafa.org/asthma-treatment).

**Always clean your nebulizer after each use. Follow the cleaning instructions that came with your nebulizer. It will keep your nebulizer working well. It will also help prevent infections.**

## HOW DO I USE MY NEBULIZER?

- 1 Wash your hands with soap and warm water.
- 2 Connect the parts of the nebulizer machine according to the manufacturer's directions. Make sure the tubing and mouthpiece or mask are tightly connected.
- 3 Pour the nebulizer solution as prescribed into the nebulizer's medicine cup. Tighten the cap over the cup.
- 4 Place the mouthpiece in your mouth between your teeth and above your tongue and create a tight seal with your lips. If you use a mask, make sure you have a tight fit over your nose and mouth. Turn the machine on.
- 5 As the mist starts, breathe in slowly for 3 to 5 seconds. Continue until the mist stops or until there is not medicine left in the cup.
- 6 Turn off the machine. Rinse your mouth with water and spit it out.
- 7 Clean and dry the medicine cup and mouthpiece or mask.

## HOW DO I CLEAN MY NEBULIZER?

- 1 Wash your hands with soap and warm water.
- 2 Take the nebulizer kit apart. Remove the mouthpiece or mask. Disconnect the tubing from the nebulizer and the medicine cup.
- 3 Hold the medicine cup and gently twist the top to the left to remove it.
- 4 Discard remaining medicine in the medication cup. Use fresh medicine each time you use the nebulizer.
- 5 Rinse all the parts (except the tubing) with hot tap water.
- 6 Air dry in a clean environment or hand dry using a soft, clean, lint-free cloth.
- 7 Store the nebulizer kit in a dry bag or clean container to keep them clean and free of dust and germs.

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**Hand-held nebulizers (also called mesh nebulizers) do not use tubing. Follow the directions that came with the nebulizer to use and clean it correctly.**



**To make sure you are using your nebulizer correctly, consider practicing in front of your doctor. Or take a video and bring it to your next appointment.**