A metered dose inhaler (MDI) is filled with a medicine that can be inhaled into the lungs. A breath actuated inhaler means that when you breathe in, it releases the medicine. Inhaled medicines work in the lungs right away.

**How to use your inhaler**

1. Shake gently and remove the cap from the mouthpiece.
2. Hold the inhaler upright and flip open the lever or take off the cap.
   - If the inhaler is new or has not been used in the last 48 hours it must be primed. Point the inhaler away from you. Lift the lever on top of the canister. Push the test fire slide button on the bottom while holding the inhaler upright. Lower the lever and repeat the steps to release the second prime spray.
3. Tilt your chin up slightly and breathe out.
4. Place your lips around the mouthpiece and begin breathing in slowly.
5. Breathe in slowly through your mouth for 3 to 5 seconds. The inhaler will release a puff of medicine.
6. Hold your breath for 10 seconds and then breathe out slowly.
7. Close the flip lever and replace the cap over the mouthpiece.

**How to care for your inhaler**

You inhaler has many doses of medicine, so it important to keep it in good working order. Use these tips to take care of your inhaler:

- Store it in a cool, dry place away from heat.
- Wipe off the mouthpiece with a dry tissue to keep it clean.
- Once a week, turn the inhaler upside down and tap so that the spray hole can be seen. Clean the hole if it gets clogged with a dry cotton swab.
- Keep the inhaler at room temperature.

**How long will the inhaler last?**

Check the canister label to see how many puffs of medicine it contains.

Figure out how many puffs you will use each day. Divide the number of puffs in the canister by the number you will use each day. This is how many days the canister will last.
For example, if your canister has 200 doses and you take 2 puffs, 4 times each day, that is 8 puffs a day. Dividing 200 by 8 equals 25, so the canister will last 25 days.

Write the date on the canister when you start using it so you can figure out when you will need to replace it.

**Throw the canister away after you have used the number of days or puffs in the canister even if it sounds like more medicine is left.** A chemical additive will be left in the canister after the medicine is gone.

### Other tips

Keep track of how many doses are left by circling the start date on a calendar or writing down how many doses you use a month. **Call your pharmacist for a refill before your inhaler is empty.**

Bring your inhaler to your appointments so you can show your health care provider how you use the inhaler. Let them know if you are having problems using your MDI. If you use more than one inhaled medicine, ask about the order in which to take these medicines.

Check the expiration date and do not use the medicine after it expires.

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**Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

The Library for Health Information is available to help you find more health information at (614) 293-3707 or e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.

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