Nebulizer Treatments

You may receive medicine through a nebulizer treatment, also called a breathing treatment or aerosol treatment. A nebulizer changes liquid medicine into a fine mist to let you breathe it into your airways. Most often the breathing treatments are given to help you breathe easier.

How often you have a treatment depends on how short of breath you are, the amount of wheezing you have and the type of medicine you take.

How to take a treatment

Sit down during your treatment. The treatment can be done with a mask or mouthpiece depending upon what works best for you.

- **If using a mouthpiece**, place the mouthpiece in your mouth past your teeth. Make a seal around the mouthpiece with your lips.
- **If using a mask**, place it over your mouth and nose.

You will see a fine mist when the treatment is started. Relax and breathe normally. Every 4 to 5 breaths, take a deep breath and hold it a few seconds. Then exhale completely. Continue until no mist is present.

Tap the nebulizer cup at times to be sure all the medicine is nebulized. The treatment will last about 10 to 20 minutes.

Remember to cough and bring up loose mucus at the end of your treatment.
Treatments in the hospital

A respiratory therapist will give you your breathing treatment in the hospital as your doctor orders. The therapist will use different nebulizers, based on the type of medicine ordered. Some nebulizers break the medicine into even finer particles.

The nebulizer used in the hospital does not require cleaning. It will only be used for your treatment. It is thrown away and replaced every few days, or when it is dirty.

Treatments at home

Follow these steps to do your treatment at home:

1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Rinse and dry your hands.

2. Gather your medicine and the right nebulizer for that medicine.

3. Check your medicine label to be sure it is the right medicine name. Also check that you have the correct dose or strength of medicine your doctor ordered. Look at the expiration date on the label and be sure that your medicine is not out of date. If the date is past, you need to get new medicine.

4. Remove the top of the nebulizer cup.

5. Measure your medicine and put it into the nebulizer cup. Use only the amount of medicine your doctor ordered. Put the top back on the cup.

6. Connect the tubing from the machine to the bottom of the cup. Connect the tubing for the mask or mouthpiece to the top of the cup.

7. Check your pulse before your treatment and write it down.

8. Turn the nebulizer on and breathe in the medicine. It is best to sit down and try to relax while you breathe.
9. Stop the treatment if:
   • Your pulse rate gets much faster.
   • You feel light headed, dizzy or shaky.

10. Wait a few minutes and if the signs go away, restart the treatment. If the signs do not go away, or if they come back when you restart the treatment, call your doctor. You may need to change your medicine or dose.

11. Clean your equipment after each treatment. Rinse the parts of the nebulizer cup and mouthpiece or mask under warm running water. Shake off the excess water and place parts on clean paper towels to air dry. Cover the parts with another clean paper towel until your next treatment.
   • You will need to do some more cleaning of your equipment at home. That is in the next section of this handout.

12. Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Rinse and dry your hands.

**Clean your equipment to prevent infection**

**One time each day:**

• Wash parts with antibacterial dish washing liquid detergent and warm water.
• Rinse parts well with warm running water.
• Place parts on paper towels to air dry. Cover with a clean paper towel until your next treatment.

**On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays:**

• **Mix up a white vinegar solution using 1 part white vinegar and 3 parts distilled water.**
  • For example, mix 1 cup of white vinegar with 3 cups of water in a container.
  • You can store any extra white vinegar solution in a tightly sealed container in your refrigerator and use it for up to one week.
  • Soak the pre-washed parts in white vinegar solution for 30 to 40 minutes. All parts should be completely covered by the solution while soaking.
  • Rinse the parts well with warm running water.
  • Place the parts on clean paper towels to air dry. Cover lightly with a second clean paper towel until your next treatment.

If you have any questions about your nebulizer treatment, ask your health care provider.