

What is a Spacer?

A spacer is a clear plastic device, designed to make a metered-dose (“puffer”) inhaler easier to use. It is recommended that everyone who has a puffer inhaler (both children and adults) uses a spacer. Instead of inhaling the medicine directly from the inhaler itself in a single breath, the mouthpiece of the inhaler is inserted into an opening in the spacer. With lips tightly sealed around the mouthpiece of the spacer, a dose from the inhaler is puffed into the chamber of the spacer, then inhaled by breathing in and out normally 4 to 6 times.

For children under the age of 2 years, a mask is attached to the mouthpiece of the spacer, creating a seal over the mouth and nose to deliver the inhaled medicine. It may be possible for children between the ages of 2 to 4 years to transition to not using a mask, provided the child is able to use the spacer correctly.

Note: if a mask is used with a child’s ‘preventer’ (corticosteroid) inhaler, wash the child’s face after each use.

Why is it necessary to use a spacer with a metered-dose inhaler?

Spacers should be used by everyone (no matter what your age) who use a “puffer” (metered-dose) inhaler. Spacers greatly increase the amount of medicine going into the lungs, rather than it ending up being deposited in the back of the throat or mouth. Spacers also improve a person’s coordination between delivering the medication from the inhaler - and breathing it in.

Advantages to using a spacer

- The amount of medicine going into the lungs, rather than it ending up in the back of your mouth and throat, is significantly increased by using a spacer.
- As a result of the above, spacers reduce the local side effects from ‘preventer’ (corticosteroid) medication in your mouth and throat e.g. sore throat, hoarse voice and oral thrush. This also means that less medicine is swallowed and then absorbed from the intestine into the rest of the body. (**Note:** you should still rinse your mouth out after using your ‘preventer’ medication, to avoid these side effects).
- It is easier to use a puffer inhaler with a spacer than an inhaler alone, as you do not need to coordinate your hand and your breathing. You can breathe in and out normally, through the spacer, 4 to 6 times. If your lungs aren’t working well, you don’t have to get all the medicine into your lungs in one breath only.
- Spacers are not only as effective as a nebuliser, they are faster and easier to use, more portable, cheaper, and not dependent on a power supply.

Before using a new spacer

Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions for the spacer you have been given to check if washing or priming is required before first use.

- The **e-Chamber** spacers are made from anti-static plastic so do not require priming.
- The **Space Chamber Plus** spacer and the **Volumatic** spacer need to be primed before using for the first time.
- To prime a spacer, wash the spacer in warm water with dishwashing liquid. Do not rinse, do not towel dry - allow to drip dry.

Where can I get a spacer from?

You can get spacers free of charge from your healthcare practitioner or local [Asthma Society](#).

Washing your spacer

Wash your spacer once a week with warm water and dishwashing liquid. Don’t rinse your spacer or dry it with a towel, but instead allow it to drip dry. This reduces the electrostatic charge on the spacer and stops the medicine from sticking to the sides of the space chamber.

Replacing your spacer

If used regularly, it is recommended that your spacer is replaced every 12 months.

Check the spacer for any cracks or other damage routinely, and replace as needed.

Spacers are not for sharing

Each person in the family using a spacer should have their own personal spacer. Spacers are made for single person use to stop the spread of infectious disease.