

NHS Lothian

Inhaler Training Guide



Author:
Approval:
Review Date:

Respiratory Prescribing Strategy Subgroup Oct 2023
Respiratory Managed Clinical Network (MCN) Jan 2024
December 2025

Contents

Background	3
Seven steps to using an inhaler device	3
When to check inhaler technique.....	3
7 steps to using an Easyhaler®	4
7 steps to using an Ellipta® inhaler	5
7 steps to using a Metered Dose Inhaler (MDI) with a spacer	6
7 steps to using a Metered Dose Inhaler (MDI)	7
7 steps to using a NEXThaler®.....	8
7 steps to using a Respimat® inhaler.....	9
7 steps to using a Turbohaler®.....	10

Acknowledgements

With acknowledgment and thanks to Dr Anna Murphy for the use of the Seven Step approach and Asthma and Lung UK for the use of the inhaler graphics and inhaler training videos.

Background

Inhaled medications are the cornerstone for treating both asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

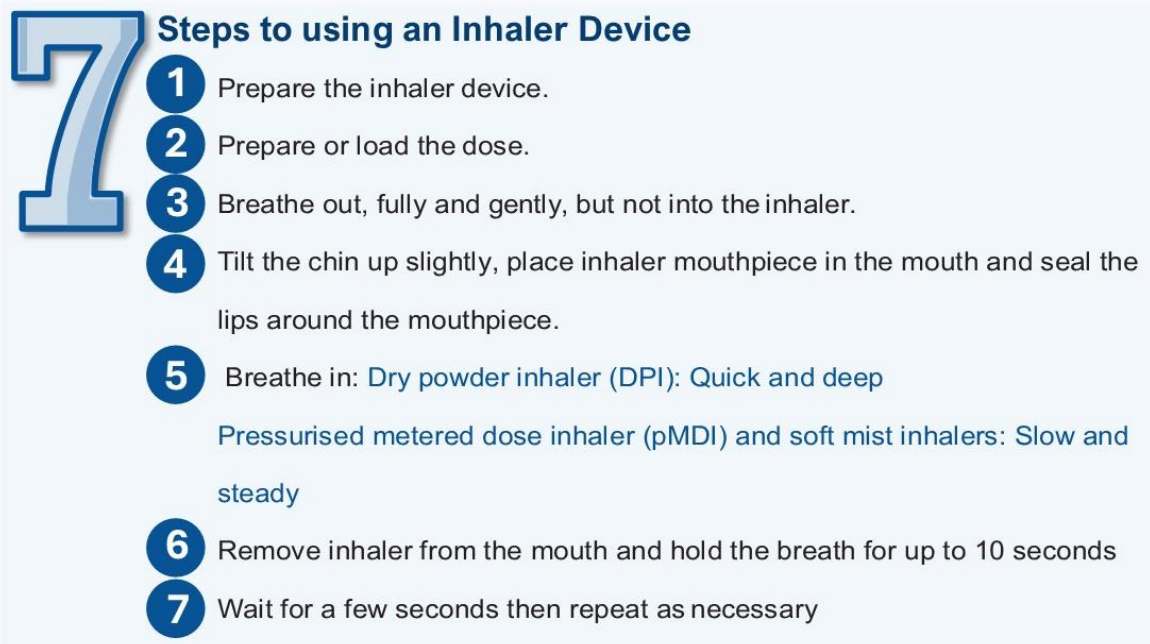
The most important advantage of the inhaled route for delivery of medicines, is that they are delivered directly into the airways and lungs. This results in higher local concentrations, with lower systemic exposure and therefore fewer systemic side effects when compared with oral or intravenous routes.

Unfortunately, inhalation of medicines can be complicated and difficult for many people, leading to suboptimal use and effect. Effective drug deposition into the lungs depends on the type of inhaler device, the characteristics of the inhaled medicine, and on the ability of the patient to use the device. Therefore, education and assessment on inhaler technique is an essential component of respiratory care.

This document is intended to support counselling of patients on inhaler technique by healthcare professionals. It is not intended to be given to patients. For prescribing information, please refer to the [Formulary | East Region Formulary \(nhs.scot\)](#) and MCN inhaler prescribing guidance.

Seven steps to using an inhaler device

The following steps are applicable to all devices. This document applies the seven steps to the inhaler devices included in the East Regional Formulary.



7 Steps to using an Inhaler Device

- 1 Prepare the inhaler device.
- 2 Prepare or load the dose.
- 3 Breathe out, fully and gently, but not into the inhaler.
- 4 Tilt the chin up slightly, place inhaler mouthpiece in the mouth and seal the lips around the mouthpiece.
- 5 Breathe in: **Dry powder inhaler (DPI): Quick and deep**
Pressurised metered dose inhaler (pMDI) and soft mist inhalers: Slow and steady
- 6 Remove inhaler from the mouth and hold the breath for up to 10 seconds
- 7 Wait for a few seconds then repeat as necessary

When to check inhaler technique

It is important to regularly check inhaler technique. However, inhaler technique should always be assessed in the following situations:

- Annual asthma/COPD review
- Patients presenting with poor control
- Prior to escalation of therapy
- Initiation of new treatments

7 steps to using an Easyhaler®



Example Devices

Salbutamol, Beclometasone, Budesonide, Fobumix®

Video Guide

[How to use an Easyhaler inhaler | Asthma + Lung UK \(asthmaandlung.org.uk\)](http://asthmaandlung.org.uk)

- 1 Prepare the inhaler device**
 - Check the dose counter to make sure the inhaler is not empty
 - Check the expiry date and when it was first opened.
- 2 Prepare or load the dose**
 - Hold the inhaler upright
 - Remove the dust cap and ensure mouthpiece is empty
 - Shake the inhaler about 3-5 times
 - Press down until you hear a click, then release and let it return to its original position.
- 3 Breathe out**, fully and gently, but not into the inhaler.
- 4**
 - Sit or stand up straight
 - Tilt the chin up slightly, place inhaler mouthpiece in the mouth and seal the lips around the mouthpiece.
- 5 Breath in**; quick and deep breath in
- 6 Remove inhaler** from the mouth and hold the breath for up to 10 seconds or, as long as comfortable.
 - Replace the mouthpiece cap.
- 7 Repeat dose** as necessary, starting at step 2
For steroid inhalers, rinse mouth after inhaling all doses.

Storage

Protect from moisture.

Expiry

Once removed from the foil packaging:

4 months: Fobumix®

6 months: beclomethasone, budesonide and salbutamol

Additional Information

- Clean inhaler regularly with a dry clean cloth
- Never breathe into a dry powder inhaler
- If you click the inhaler more than once, tap the device to remove the drug and start again
- Return to pharmacy if no longer taking or empty for safe disposal.

7 steps to using an Ellipta® inhaler



Example Devices

Trelegy Ellipta®, Anoro Ellipta®, Incruse Ellipta®, Relvar Ellipta®

Video Guide

[How to use an Ellipta inhaler | Asthma + Lung UK \(asthmaandlung.org.uk\)](https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk)

- 1 Prepare the inhaler device**
 - Check the dose counter to make sure the inhaler is not empty
 - Check the expiry date
- 2 Prepare or load the dose**
 - Slide the cover over until it clicks
 - Make sure the mouthpiece is empty
 - Hold the inhaler upright
 - Ensure the inhaler vent is not covered.
- 3 Breathe out**, fully and gently, but not into the inhaler
- 4**
 - Sit or stand up straight
 - Tilt the chin up slightly, hold the inhaler horizontally and place inhaler mouthpiece in the mouth and seal the lips around the mouthpiece.
- 5 Breath in**; quick and deep breath in
- 6 Remove inhaler** from the mouth and hold the breath for up to 10 seconds or as long as comfortable
 - Close the inhaler cover.
- 7 No repeat dose necessary**

For steroid inhalers, rinse mouth after inhaling all doses.

Storage

Protect from moisture.

Expiry

Once removed from the foil packaging: 6 weeks

Additional Information

- It is not normally necessary to clean this inhaler. If you need to clean it, use a dry clean cloth.
- Never breathe into a dry powder inhaler.
- Return to pharmacy if no longer taking or empty for safe disposal.

7 steps to using a Metered Dose Inhaler (MDI) with a spacer



Example Devices

Salbutamol, Soprobec®, Trixeo®, Luforbec®, Trimbow®, Combisal®

Video Guide

[How to use a pMDI inhaler with a spacer – tidal breathing](#)

[How to use a pMDI inhaler with a spacer – single breath and hold](#)

1

Prepare the inhaler device

- Check the dose counter (where available) to make sure the inhaler is not empty
- Check the expiry date

2

Prepare or load the dose

- Remove cap
- Make sure the mouthpiece is empty
- Hold the inhaler upright
- Shake inhaler 4-5 times
- Attach inhaler to spacer device

3

Breathe out, fully and gently, but not into the inhaler

4

- Sit or stand up straight
- Tilt the chin up slightly, place inhaler mouthpiece in the mouth and seal the lips around the mouthpiece
- If using a spacer with a mask, place mask over face.

5

Breathe in:

For **single breath**: breathe slowly and gently as you press the canister down, ensuring the spacer (Aerochamber Plus Flow-Vu) does not whistle.

For **tidal breathing**: breathe in and out slowly at least 5 times keeping the spacer in the mouth or mask on the face. Ensure the spacer does not whistle.

6

For single breath: remove spacer from the mouth and hold the breath for up to 10 seconds.

For tidal breathing: remove spacer from mouth after completion of breaths.

7

Wait for at least 30 seconds and repeat dose if required starting at step 2. For steroid inhalers, rinse mouth after inhaling all doses.

Storage & Expiry

As per manufacturer. Luforbec® and Trimbow® MDI are stored in a refrigerator until dispensed when they have a 3-month expiry stored at room temperature (below 25°C). All other MDIs are stored at room temperature.

Additional Information

- Select the correct size mask for age or face.
- [AeroChamber Plus® Flow-Vu® | Instructions for Use \(aerochambervhc.com\)](http://aerochambervhc.com) includes information on how to clean device. Replace spacer every 12 months.
- Return to pharmacy if no longer taking or empty for safe disposal. Spacers should be disposed of in landfill bin. Not all MDIs have a dose counter to indicate when the medicine is finished. The inhaler can still deliver propellant without medication. Important to consider methods to tell when the device is finished e.g. annotate start and end dates for preventers, tally for relievers. The device may also taste different.

7 steps to using a Metered Dose Inhaler (MDI)



Example Devices

Salbutamol, Soprobec®, Trixeo®, Luforbec®, Trimbow®, Combisal®

Video Guide

[How to use a pMDI inhaler | Asthma + Lung UK \(asthmaandlung.org.uk\)](https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/how-to-use-a-pmdi-inhaler)

- 1 Prepare the inhaler device**
 - Check the dose counter (where available) to make sure the inhaler is not empty
 - Check the expiry date
- 2 Prepare or load the dose**
 - Remove cap
 - Make sure the mouthpiece is empty
 - Hold the inhaler upright
 - Shake inhaler 4-5 times
- 3 Breathe out**, fully and gently, but not into the inhaler
- 4**
 - Sit or stand up straight
 - Tilt the chin up slightly, place inhaler mouthpiece in the mouth and seal the lips around the mouthpiece.
- 5 Breath in**, slowly and gently as you press the canister down
- 6 Remove inhaler** from the mouth and hold the breath for up to 10 seconds or as long as comfortable
- 7 Wait for at least 30 seconds and repeat dose if required** starting at step 2. For steroid inhalers, rinse mouth after inhaling all doses.

Storage

Luforbec® and Trimbow® MDI are stored in a refrigerator until dispensed when stored at room temperature (below 25°C)

All other MDIs are stored at room temperature.

Expiry

As per manufacturer. Luforbec® and Trimbow® MDI have a 3-month expiry once removed from the refrigerator for dispensing.

Additional Information

- **Patients should be encouraged to use a spacer with an MDI wherever possible to improve medicine delivery.**
- Return to pharmacy if no longer taking or empty for safe disposal.
- Not all MDIs have a dose counter to indicate when the medicine is finished. The inhaler can still deliver propellant without medication. Important to consider methods to tell when the device is finished e.g. annotate start and end dates for preventers, tally for relievers. The device may also taste different.

7 steps to using a NEXThaler®



Example Devices

Fostair®, Trimbow®

Video Guide

[How to use a NEXThaler inhaler | Asthma + Lung UK \(asthmaandlung.org.uk\)](https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk)

- 1 Prepare the inhaler device**
 - Check the dose counter to make sure the inhaler is not empty
 - Check the expiry date and when it was first opened.
- 2 Prepare or load the dose**
 - Hold the inhaler upright
 - Slide the cover over until it clicks
 - Make sure the mouthpiece is empty
 - Ensure the inhaler vent is not covered.
- 3 Breathe out**, fully and gently, but not into the inhaler.
- 4**
 - Sit or stand up straight
 - Tilt the chin up slightly, place inhaler mouthpiece in the mouth and seal the lips around the mouthpiece. Do not cover the vent.
- 5 Breath in**; quick and deep breath in and listen for a click.
- 6 Remove inhaler** from the mouth and hold the breath for up to 10 seconds or as long as comfortable. Close inhaler cover.
- 7 Repeat dose if required** starting at step 2.
Rinse mouth after inhaling all doses.

Storage

Protect from moisture.

Expiry

Once removed from the foil packaging: 6 months

Additional Information

- It is not normally necessary to clean this inhaler. If you need to clean it, use a dry clean cloth.
- Never breathe into a dry powder inhaler.
- If you open and close the device by mistake, no doses will be lost.
- Return to pharmacy if no longer taking or empty for safe disposal.

7 steps to using a Respimat® inhaler



Example Devices

Spiriva®, Spiolto®

Video Guide

[How to use a Respimat inhaler | Asthma + Lung UK](https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/how-to-use-a-respimat-inhaler)
([asthmaandlung.org.uk](https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk))

1

Prepare the inhaler device (inserting a new cartridge)

- Keep the cap closed and press the safety catch on the side to remove the clear base
- Insert a new cartridge into the inhaler and click it into place by pressing the inhaler down on a firm surface
- Mark on the check box on your inhaler to indicate that you have used a new cartridge
- Put the clear base back into place.

Priming the inhaler

- Hold the inhaler upright with the cap closed
- Turn the clear base in the direction of the arrows until it clicks
- Open the cap fully and point the inhaler towards the floor away from you and press the dose release button
- Close the cap. Repeat the priming sequence until you see a cloud/mist
- Once you can see a cloud, repeat the priming sequence three more times
- The inhaler is now ready to use.

Prepare the inhaler device (daily use)

- Check the dose counter to make sure the cartridge is not empty
- Check the expiry date.

2

Prepare or load the dose

- Hold the inhaler upright with the cap closed
- Turn the clear base in the direction of the arrows until it clicks
- Push up the catch at the side of the inhaler to open the cap
- Hold the inhaler horizontally and make sure the mouthpiece is empty.

3

Breathe out, fully and gently, but not into the inhaler.

4

- Sit or stand up straight
- Tilt the chin up slightly, place inhaler mouthpiece in the mouth and seal the lips around the mouthpiece
- Ensure the holes on either side of the mouthpiece are not blocked.

5

Breathe in, slow and steady whilst pressing the dose release button at the same time.

6

- **Remove inhaler** from the mouth and hold the breath for up to 10 seconds
- Close the mouthpiece cap.

7

Wait for at least 30 seconds and repeat dose if required starting at step 2.

Storage & Expiry

No additional storage requirements. Cartridge expiry: 3 months once in use. Replace inhaler device every 6 months.

Additional Information

- Return to pharmacy if no longer taking or empty for safe disposal.

7 steps to using a Turbohaler®



Example Devices

Symbicort®, Bricanyl (terbutaline)

Video Guide

[How to use a Turbohaler inhaler | Asthma + Lung UK \(asthmaandlung.org.uk\)](https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/how-to-use-a-turbohaler-inhaler)

1 Priming the inhaler (first use only)

- Twist and lift off the cover
- Hold the inhaler upright with the coloured base at the bottom
- Turn the coloured base as far as it will turn in one direction and then all the way back again until it clicks. It does not matter which direction you turn it first
- Replace cover.

Prepare the inhaler device

- Twist and lift off the cover
- You may hear a rattling sound.

2 Prepare or load the dose

- Hold the inhaler upright with the coloured base at the bottom
- Ensure the mouthpiece is empty
- Turn the coloured base as far as it will turn in one direction and then all the way back again. It does not matter which direction you turn it first.
- You should hear the device click. It does not matter whether this is the first or second turn.
- Do not hold the mouthpiece when you load the Turbohaler®.

3 Breathe out, fully and gently, but not into the inhaler.

4 Sit or stand up straight

- Tilt the chin up slightly, place inhaler mouthpiece in the mouth and seal the lips around the mouthpiece.

5 Breath in; quick and deep breath in.

6 Remove inhaler from the mouth and hold the breath for up to 10 seconds or as long as comfortable.

7 Repeat dose if appropriate, starting at step 2

- For steroid inhalers, rinse mouth after inhaling all doses.
- Replace the cover tightly after use.

Storage & Expiry

No special storage requirements. Expiry: 3 years

Additional Information

- Do not remove or twist the mouthpiece. Do not use the inhaler if the mouthpiece is damaged or has come off the device.
- The sound heard when the Turbohaler® is shaken, is produced by a drying agent and not the medicine. The sound does not tell you how much medicine is left.
- Return to pharmacy if no longer taking or empty for safe disposal.