

Use and Care of a Nebulizer

A nebulizer is a device driven by a compressed air machine. It allows you to take asthma medicine in the form of a mist (wet aerosol). It consists of a cup, a mouthpiece attached to a T-shaped part or a mask, and thin, plastic tubing to connect to the compressed air machine. It is used mostly by three types of patients:

- Young children under age 5
- Patients who have problems using metered dose inhalers
- Patients with severe asthma

A nebulizer helps make sure they get the right amount of medicine.

A routine for cleaning the nebulizer is important because an unclean nebulizer may cause an infection. A good cleaning routine keeps the nebulizer from clogging up and helps it last longer.

Directions for using the compressed air machine may vary (check the machine's directions), but generally the tubing has to be put into the outlet of the machine before it is turned on.

How to Use a Nebulizer

1. Measure the correct amount of normal saline solution using a clean dropper and put it into the cup. If your medicine is premixed, go to step 3.
2. Draw up the correct amount of medicine using a clean eyedropper or syringe and put it into the cup with the saline solution. Once you know your number of drops, you can count them as a check on yourself.
3. Fasten the mouthpiece to the T-shaped part and then fasten this unit to the cup **OR** fasten the mask to the cup. For a child over the age of 2, use a mouthpiece unit because it will deliver more medicine than a mask.
4. Put the mouthpiece in your mouth. Seal your lips tightly around it **OR** place the mask on your face.
5. Turn on the air compressor machine.
6. Take slow, deep breaths in through the mouth.
7. Hold each breath 1 to 2 seconds before breathing out.
8. Continue until the medicine is gone from the cup (approximately 10 minutes).
9. Store the medicine as directed after each use.

Cleaning the Nebulizer

Don't forget: Cleaning and getting rid of germs prevents infection. Cleaning keeps the nebulizer from clogging up and helps it last longer.

After Each Use

1. Remove the mask or the mouthpiece and T-shaped part from the cup. Remove the tubing and set it aside. The tubing should not be washed or rinsed. Rinse the mask or mouthpiece and T-shaped part – as well as the eyedropper or syringe – in warm running water for 30 seconds. Use distilled or sterile water for rinsing, if possible.
2. Shake off excess water. Air dry on a clean cloth or paper towel.
3. Put the mask or the mouthpiece and T-shaped part, cup, and tubing back together and connect the device to the compressed air machine. Run the machine for 10 to 20 seconds to dry the inside of the nebulizer.
4. Disconnect the tubing from the compressed air machine. Store the nebulizer in a ziplock plastic bag.
5. Place a cover over the compressed air machine.

Once Every Day

1. Remove the mask or the mouthpiece and T-shaped part from the cup. Remove the tubing and set it aside. The tubing should not be washed or rinsed.
2. Wash the mask or the mouthpiece and T-shaped part – as well as the eyedropper or syringe – with a mild dishwashing soap and warm water.
3. Rinse under a strong stream of water for 30 seconds. Use distilled or sterile water if possible.
4. Shake off excess water. Air dry on a clean cloth or paper towel.
5. Put the mask or the mouthpiece and T-shaped part, cup, and tubing back together and connect the device to the compressed air machine. Run the machine for 10 to 20 seconds to dry the inside of the nebulizer.
6. Disconnect the tubing from the compressed air machine. Store the nebulizer in a ziplock plastic bag.
7. Place a cover over the compressed air machine.

Once or Twice a Week

1. Remove the mask or the mouthpiece and T-shaped part from the cup. Remove the tubing and set it aside. The tubing should not be washed or rinsed. Wash the mask or the mouthpiece and T-shaped part – as well as the eyedropper or syringe – with a mild dishwashing soap and warm water.
2. Rinse under a strong stream of water for 30 seconds.
3. Soak for 30 minutes in a solution that is one part distilled white vinegar and two parts distilled water. Throw out the vinegar water solution after use; do not reuse it.

4. Rinse the nebulizer parts and the eyedropper or syringe under warm running water for 1 minute. Use distilled or sterile water, if possible.
5. Shake off excess water. Air dry on a clean cloth or paper towel.
6. Put the mask or the mouthpiece and T-shaped part, cup, and tubing back together and connect the device to the compressed air machine. Run the machine for 10 to 20 seconds to dry the inside of the nebulizer thoroughly.
7. Disconnect the tubing from the compressed air machine. Store the nebulizer in a ziplock plastic bag.
8. Clean the surface of the compressed air machine with a well-wrung, soapy cloth or sponge. You could also use an alcohol or disinfectant wipe. NEVER PUT THE COMPRESSED AIR MACHINE IN WATER.
9. Place a cover over the compressed air machine.