



*Better
Together*

Patient information

Nebulisation Therapy for Adults

Medical Division: Royal Liverpool Hospital and
Broadgreen Hospital

Nebulisation is a way of giving a drug directly into the lungs over a period of around 10 -15 minutes. It can deliver the drug in a higher concentration than with an inhaler.

Occasional use of a nebuliser for a flare-up may help you or even save your life. However, in the case of severe episodes you must seek medical attention straight away. Your nebuliser may improve your breathing for a short time but you must not delay in getting medical treatment.

The Nebuliser

The nebuliser is a device that turns a liquid into a fine mist or spray by blowing air or oxygen through it.

(Some medication, such as antibiotics, requires a special type of nebuliser chamber and special Instructions will be given if you are prescribed them).

The Medicine

A nebuliser can be used for taking preventer and reliever medication. It is important to use your preventer twice a day even if you do not need your reliever medication. If you need to use your reliever, use it before the preventer to open up the airways and help the preventer medicine to reach the lower part of your lungs.

Put the prescribed amount of your medicine into the nebuliser chamber (always read the instructions first on how to do this). The medicine normally comes in individual doses. If the medicine needs to be diluted, only use the prescribed solution (usually normal saline). Occasionally some antibiotics may need to be diluted with sterile water. Never use tap or distilled water.

If you are using two different types of relievers such as Salbutamol (Ventolin) and Ipratropium (Atrovent), you can add these together in the same chamber.

(Not all medicines can be mixed so always check with your pharmacist before trying to mix them).

How to take your medication

Assemble your nebuliser equipment as shown and refer to the manufacturer's instruction booklet.

Sit up straight and lie back slightly in a well supported position. Switch on the power supply and breathe in the mist at your normal pace of breathing. Avoid talking while inhaling the treatment. If you are using a mouthpiece, you may need to remove it to swallow collected saliva.

You may prefer or be advised to use a mouthpiece rather than a mask but a mask should be kept to use when you need emergency nebulisation. A mouthpiece should be used for preventers. Be sure to rinse your face and mouth with water after this treatment as it can cause a skin rash or sore mouth.

Keep the chamber upright while nebulising. At the end of treatment tap the side of the nebuliser chamber to send any droplets trapped on the side to the bottom. Nebulisation should normally take 10 -15 minutes. If it takes longer than 20 minutes then check that your compressor machine is working properly (e.g. the filter or chamber may need changing), or have it serviced.

When the chamber starts to "splutter" the nebuliser treatment has finished. A small amount of solution may still be left at the bottom of the chamber, but this can be thrown away.

Emergency Relief

If your breathing becomes worse than usual, you can take an extra dose of reliever treatment. If you get a good response and your breathing returns to normal inform your doctor within 24 hours that you have needed extra medication. If you get little or no relief seek urgent medical attention. If you have a self-management plan refer to it for further information.

You Must

Keep a supply of Reliever medication with your nebuliser
Keep the nebuliser in good working order

Seek medical help if your nebuliser is not helping your breathing as usual

Oxygen

Home oxygen will not be strong enough to work your nebuliser. High oxygen levels are not good for people with some lung conditions, so oxygen should not be used to work your nebuliser unless the doctor tells you to and gives you a special adaptor.

Care and cleaning of equipment

Always read the manufacturer's instructions for the care of the compressor machine. The nebuliser chamber should be cleaned after each use.

To do this, carefully take the nebuliser chamber apart and wash in warm soapy water and rinse in clean warm water.

All parts should be allowed to dry naturally and thoroughly. Care should be taken not to lose the small parts from inside the nebuliser whilst taking it apart for cleaning (it is useful to have a spare in case this happens).

Once a week the nebuliser chamber should be soaked and disinfected in a solution of Milton, diluted according to instructions. Soak the chamber for about 2 hours before finally rinsing and drying.

Disposable nebuliser chambers should be changed every one to three months. If you have a "durable" nebuliser chamber, check the manufacturer's instructions as it may have to be boiled once a week but can last 12 to 18 months if looked after properly.

Further information

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