



# Maintenance Medication & Rescue Inhalers



**Q:** How often should I use my rescue inhaler or nebulizer when I am having difficulty breathing?

**A:** Rescue inhalers and nebulizer solutions should be used as directed by your health care provider. Using more medication than prescribed is not likely to be beneficial and can cause adverse health effects.

**Q:** What are the common adverse effects associated with rescue inhalers and nebulizers?

**A:** People who use inhalers and nebulizer solutions containing the active ingredient **albuterol** are known to complain of the following symptoms:

- Cough & sore throat
- Nausea & vomiting
- Nervousness/jittery feeling
- Increased heart rate (tachycardia)
- Tremors and agitation

**Q:** Can I use more than the recommended amount of albuterol if my breathing does not improve?

**A:** For anyone with asthma or other respiratory issues that require the need for a rescue inhaler, a physician or pharmacist will advise you about the maximum amount that should be used.

**Q:** If I run out of my rescue inhaler can I use my maintenance inhaler or medication instead?

**A:** Bronchodilators, like albuterol, are quick-acting. The active ingredients in rescue inhalers are intended to provide immediate relief of breathing difficulty related to asthma and other respiratory issues. Maintenance medications will not provide acute relief for symptoms related to asthma attacks and bronchospasms.

Each person under medical care for respiratory conditions should have an action plan. Part of that plan includes seeking emergency medical care for symptoms that are not relieved by the use of a rescue inhaler or medication.

Metered dose inhalers (MDI) display the number of doses remaining after each use. Keep track of remaining doses and order refills well in advance.

**Q:** Is it possible to overdose my rescue inhaler or nebulizer solution?

**A:** Yes. Using rescue inhalers or bronchodilators in excess of the recommended amount can lead to poisoning with adverse health effects. Severe symptoms can occur such as:

- Chest pain
- Paradoxical bronchospasms
- Low blood pressure
- Pulmonary edema
- Electrolyte abnormalities
- Cardiac arrhythmias

**For more questions regarding the proper use of maintenance and rescue medication for asthma and other respiratory issues, speak with your physician, pharmacist, or call the Poison Helpline.**

Call **911** immediately if these symptoms occur or if breathing issues do not resolve with recommended use of rescue inhalers.

POISON HELPLINE

1-800-222-1222

Available 24/7/365

Free, confidential, & expert advice

