

# Spacers or nebulisers in acute asthma?

Many clinical trials have found spacers and nebulisers to be equally effective for delivering high dose bronchodilators (reliever medicines).

For the management of acute severe asthma, the British Thoracic Society Guidelines on Asthma Management recommend up to 10 puffs of salbutamol, given one puff at a time through a spacer, every 15-30 seconds.

Spacer devices have some advantages over nebulisers:

- They are cheaper.
- They are not dependent on a power supply.
- They are less frightening, especially with children.

Spacer devices are adequate for most mild to moderate acute exacerbations of asthma, and for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. (COPD).

## How to use a spacer

- Shake the inhaler.
- Fit the inhaler into spacer opening.
- Press the inhaler once only.
- Breathe in *slowly* and deeply through the spacer mouthpiece.

- Hold your breath for 5-10 seconds.
- OR if breathless take 2-3 normal breaths keeping the spacer in your mouth all of the time.
- Repeat these steps for further doses.
- Wash your spacer once a week with warm water and dishwashing liquid. **Don't rinse. Drip dry.** This reduces the electrostatic charge so that the medicine does not stick to the spacer sides.

## What spacers are available?

Contact your local Asthma Society or doctor for local supply information or Air Flow Products on freephone 0800 AIRFLOW (247 3569) or freefax 0800 323 270.