

Change is Coming for Asthma Inhalers

NOVEMBER 10, 2008

DENVER — Millions of asthma patients are facing a federally mandated change by the end of the year in the inhalers they use. For many, there is concern and confusion over the change and how it will affect them. The medicine in quick-relief asthma inhalers is staying the same, but the chemical used to “propel” the medicine is changing.

For specific instructions for properly using several of the most common inhalers go to "[Treatments and Medications](#)."

For information on cleaning and priming different HFA inhalers, go to "[What's New with Metered Dose Inhalers?](#)"

Beginning January 1, 2009, chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs, will be eliminated as propellants for the asthma medication albuterol, because CFCs damage Earth's protective ozone layer. The propellants are being replaced with several new kinds of inhalers that are more environment-friendly. Most [controller medications](#) that have recently come on the market contain environmentally safe propellants, but now patients are having to switch their [rescue medication inhalers](#).

“With these new rescue inhalers on the market, it is even more of a challenge to teach patients to use their inhalers correctly,” said Melanie Gleason, Physician Assistant at National Jewish. “Fortunately, many of the new inhalers have advantages that make them more effective once people learn how to operate them.”

The different kinds of inhalers, using hydrofluoroalkane (HFA) as a propellant, require different techniques. If people don't use their inhalers properly, less medication reaches the airways where it is needed. As a result, asthma patients can continue to suffer asthma symptoms and attacks even though they are using their inhalers.

Some of the changes that patients can expect with the HFA inhalers include: spray pressure, taste, priming and cleaning techniques, and cost. Below are some links to help make your transition to HFA inhalers easier.

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America has set up a website to provide information to patients and answer frequently asked questions about the transition from CFC inhalers to HFA inhalers.

Also, make sure you speak with your doctor about your overall asthma management plan and find out which treatments are right for you.

National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 121 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the [media resources page](#).

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