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## Albuterol inhaler (Proventil, Ventolin)

Albuterol is a 'rescue' or 'quick-relief' inhaler.

Make sure you know how to use the inhaler properly. If you are not sure, ask your physician or pharmacist to show you.

If after using the inhaler your symptoms do not improve, contact your physician for advice straightaway.

The most common side-effect is feeling shaky. This should soon pass.

Do not smoke. Smoking causes irritation to the lungs and will make your condition worse.

### About albuterol

Type of medicine	Bronchodilator (a short-acting beta <sub>2</sub> agonist)
Used for	Asthma and other airways-related problems
Also called	Accuneb®; ProAir®; Proventil HFA®; Ventolin HFA®;
Available as	Inhalation aerosol; dry powder inhaler; nebulizer solution

Albuterol (also known as salbutamol) is called a bronchodilator medicine because it widens (dilates) your airways. It works by opening up the air passages in your lungs so that air can flow into your lungs more freely. This helps to relieve symptoms of [asthma](#) and [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease \(COPD\)](#) such as coughing, wheezing and feeling breathless. It starts to work within a few minutes and the effect will last between 3-5 hours.

Albuterol inhalers are often referred to as 'rescue' or 'quick-relief' medicines. This is because they relieve symptoms of breathlessness quickly. Although they relieve breathlessness, they do not prevent the breathlessness from happening.

The colour and style of your inhaler device will depend on the brand your physician has prescribed; make sure you receive the same brand each time you collect your medicine. Ask your pharmacist if you are unsure.

## **Before taking albuterol**

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine may only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons, before you start taking albuterol it is important that your physician knows:

- If you are pregnant, trying for a baby, or breastfeeding. This is because it is particularly important that your breathing is well controlled if you are pregnant.
- If you have an overactive thyroid gland.
- If you have heart or blood vessel problems, or if you have an irregular heartbeat.
- If you have high blood pressure (hypertension).
- If you have high sugar levels in your blood (diabetes).
- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.
- If you are taking any other medicines. This includes any medicines you are taking which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.

## **How to use albuterol inhalers**

- Before using your inhaler, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside the pack. The leaflet will give you more information about albuterol, diagrams to remind you how to use and clean your inhaler device, and a full list of side-effects which you may experience from using it.

- Follow your physician's instructions carefully and make sure you know how to use your inhaler properly. There are several types of inhaler device. Some of these devices create a spray which you inhale, others are activated when you breathe in. If you are not sure how to use the device you have been given, ask your physician or pharmacist to show you.
- You will receive a written asthma action plan from your physician to tell you how many puffs (inhalations) to use for each dose, and the maximum number of inhalations you should use in 24 hours. If you do not get relief from your symptoms after using the albuterol inhaler, you must contact your physician for advice straightaway.
- Your physician may give you a spacer device to use with the albuterol inhaler, particularly if you struggle to co-ordinate breathing in and pressing the inhaler device. Spacer devices are also useful for giving albuterol to young children. The device helps to make sure that the medicine travels right into the lungs. Your physician or pharmacist will be able to advise you on how to use the spacer device with the inhaler.

## **Getting the most from your treatment**

- Try to keep your regular appointments with your physician and asthma clinic. This is so your physician can review your condition on a regular basis.
- Make sure that you keep your albuterol inhaler with you all the time in case you need to use it. It should provide you with several hours' relief. If at any time you feel it is not working, you should let your physician know straightaway.
- If you are using other inhalers at the same time, use the albuterol inhaler first and then wait for a few minutes before using the other inhalers. Albuterol opens your air passages to allow the other inhalers to work more effectively.
- If at any time your breathing gets worse, continue to use your inhalers but also contact your physician for advice straightaway. Also, if you find you are using the maximum number of albuterol puffs (inhalations) every day, or if you continue to have symptoms despite using the maximum amount, you must let your physician know about this too, as you may require additional treatment.

- Do not smoke. Smoking causes irritation and damage to the lungs, and will make your condition worse. Speak with your physician or pharmacist for further advice if you are having difficulty in stopping smoking.
- Some inhalers may need to be 'primed' before first use and cleaned occasionally to ensure they continue to work properly. Follow the printed instructions that come with your device.
- If you are having an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment that you are taking albuterol.
- If you buy any medicines, check with your doctor or a pharmacist that they are suitable for you to take with albuterol.

## Can albuterol cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains some of the most common ones associated with albuterol. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with your medicine. The unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your physician or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

<b>Common albuterol side-effects</b>	<b>What can I do if I experience this?</b>
Feeling shaky	This feeling should soon pass. If not it may be a sign your dose is too high; let your physician know
Headache	If the headaches continue speak with your physician; it may be a sign your dose is too high
Nervous tension, muscle cramps, being aware of your heartbeat	If any of these become troublesome, speak with your physician or clinic

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to this medicine, speak with your physician or pharmacist.

## How to store albuterol

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

## Important information about all medicines

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the emergency room of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Ask your pharmacist about ways to dispose of medicines safely in your local area.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

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## Further reading

- [FDA Drug Label, Ventolin® HFA \(albuterol sulfate aerosol, metered\)](#); GlaxoSmithKline LLC, DailyMed, National Institutes of Health, U.S National Library of Medicine. Dated August 2021.

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