

Choosing the right inhaler

This guide can help you and your health care team choose an inhaler device that's right for you. It looks at how you breathe, how well your hands work, what feels easy to use, and what matters to you – like how big the inhaler device is and how much it costs. The goal is to choose an inhaler that you **can** and **will** use correctly, to get the right amount of medication into your lungs.

Learn about the options

There are many types of inhaler devices, and it's important to know how each works and what they require from you. Below is an overview of the different options and factors to consider:

Device	How it works	Good if you...	Things to think about
Dry powder inhaler (DPI)	You breathe in quick and deep through the mouthpiece; the medicine is in dry powder form	can breathe in quickly and strongly	✓ No propellant ✓ No need to press and breathe in at the same time ✓ Small and easy to carry ⚠ Needs a strong, quick breath ⚠ Some types may be tricky to load
Metered dose inhaler (MDI)	You press the top and breathe in slow and steady; the spray is made by a gas propellant	can time your breath with pressing the inhaler and take a slow, steady breath in	✓ Works best with a spacer or Haleraid if needed ⚠ Harder if hands are weak or stiff ⚠ Needs good timing to work well unless used with a spacer ⚠ Contains propellant
Spacer (with MDI)	A chamber that attaches to a MDI, making it easier to breathe the spray in	have trouble taking in one slow breath, holding your breath or timing your breath with pressing the inhaler	✓ Makes MDI easier to use ✓ More medicine gets to lungs, less stuck in mouth ⚠ Some spacers can be bulky to carry ⚠ Must be cleaned regularly (at least once a month or after flare-ups/exacerbations)
Breath-actuated MDI	You breathe in and the device sprays automatically	can take a slow, steady breath in but can't time your breath with pressing the inhaler	✓ Easier to use than MDI if timing is hard ⚠ Still needs a slow, steady breath ⚠ Contains propellant
Soft mist inhaler (SMI)	You press and breathe in slow and steady. It makes a soft cloud using a spring, not gas	can't take a fast, deep breath	✓ Fine mist is gentle and easy to breathe in ✓ Less effort needed ✓ No propellant ⚠ Can be harder to set up or load
Haleraid (with MDI)	A helper tool to squeeze the MDI if your hands can't press	have sore, stiff or weak hands	✓ Makes pressing the MDI easier ✓ Helpful for arthritis or weak hands ⚠ Still need to time breath with spray unless used with a spacer



TIP: If you use more than one inhaler device, try to keep them all the same type (all DPIs or all MDIs). It's easier to remember and use them right.



What matters to you?

This section helps you think about what matters most to you in choosing an inhaler device. Please consider the following questions and tick the boxes that apply to you:

I find it hard to...	Agree	Disagree
breathe in quick and deep		
take a slow, steady breath in		
use my hands to twist, press or load an inhaler		
breathe in and press the inhaler at the same time		
see the dose counter clearly		

I care about...	Agree	Disagree
choosing a device that has a lower impact on the environment		
having just one type of inhaler device if I use more than one		
having an inhaler device that's small and easy to carry		
picking an inhaler device that costs less		



TIP: Talk to your health care team about what matters most to you. It's okay to ask for a change if your inhaler isn't working for you.



Do I have enough to decide?

Before making your decision, make sure you have all the information you need. Here are some questions to discuss with your health care team to help guide your decision:

Ask your health care team
What type of inhaler devices could suit me?
Can I try them out or see how they feel?
Will I be shown how to use it correctly?
Can I get help if I forget how to use it?
Can I change it later if it doesn't suit me?



Want to learn more?

- Lung Foundation Australia: **Using your inhaler**
- Talk to your GP, nurse or pharmacist.