

Albuterol Inhalers: Time to Transition

SWITCH TO
HFA-PROPELLED
INHALERS BY:

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Albuterol is a quick-relief medication that's used to open up the airways so that it's easier to breathe. The medication is used by people with certain airway diseases, such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a group of lung diseases that includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

One method of delivering albuterol is the metered dose inhaler, a hand-held device that delivers a specific amount of medication directly into the lungs. Traditionally, inhalers have contained chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), a type of propellant that helps the albuterol reach the lungs.

If you haven't done so already ... talk with your health care professional about switching to an HFA-propelled albuterol inhaler.

But inhalers with CFCs are being phased out because they are harmful to the environment.

Here are facts you should know about switching from your CFC-propelled albuterol inhaler to inhalers that contain propellants called hydrofluoroalkanes (HFAs).

CFCs deplete the ozone layer.

CFCs deplete ozone high up in the stratosphere—the part of the earth's atmosphere that protects us from the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation. In the stratosphere, the ozone layer serves as a shield that absorbs ultraviolet radiation and keeps it from reaching the earth's surface. CFCs are among the substances that damage the ozone layer. This leads to higher levels of ultraviolet B radiation, which has negative effects, including increases in skin cancers and cataracts. Under an international agreement, the United States, along with almost all countries of the world, agreed to phase out CFCs and other ozone-depleting substances.

CFC-propelled albuterol inhalers will no longer be available after Dec. 31, 2008.

In accordance with an FDA Final Rule and under the authority of the Clean Air Act of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, no CFC-propelled albuterol inhalers can be produced, marketed, or sold in the United States after Dec. 31, 2008. Manufacturers

have been increasing production of HFA-propelled albuterol inhalers so that sufficient supplies exist to replace the CFC-containing inhalers. If you haven't done so already, you should talk with your health care professional about switching to an HFA-propelled albuterol inhaler.

Albuterol inhalers containing HFAs deliver the same medicine, but there are some differences.

The HFA-propelled albuterol inhalers are still convenient and have been shown to be safe and effective in studies with patients. But you may find that the spray from an HFA inhaler tastes and feels different than the spray from the CFC-propelled albuterol inhalers. The spray from an HFA inhaler may feel less forceful, but this does not mean that the medication is not working.

Cleaning and priming your HFA inhaler are especially important.

Cleaning and priming helps prevent medication build-up and blockages, and ensures that the inhaler works properly. Priming an inhaler involves shaking it well and then releasing test sprays into the air. Be sure to hold the inhaler away from your face so that you don't get medication in your eyes. Each inhaler has specific instructions for cleaning and priming that you should follow. Refer to the patient information that accompanies the product.

Four alternative HFA-propelled inhalers are approved by FDA.

There are four products available that can be used to replace your CFC-propelled albuterol inhaler:

- Proair HFA Inhalation Aerosol (Ivax Corp.)
- Proventil HFA Inhalation Aerosol (Schering-Plough)
- Ventolin HFA Inhalation Aerosol (GlaxoSmithKline)
- Xopenex HFA Inhalation Aerosol (Sepracor)

While they have all been shown to be effective, there are some differences between the products. You may need to talk with your health care professional and try different inhalers to find the product that is right for you. [FDA](#)

For More Information

Metered Dose Inhalers (MDIs)
www.fda.gov/Cder/mdi/default.htm

FDA Safety Update: Asthma Medications
www.fda.gov/consumer/updates/asthmameds051308.html

FDA's Web Page on Eliminating Ozone-depleting Substances from Metered-Dose Inhalers
www.fda.gov/cder/mdi/albuterol.htm