

Inhaled medication

- Keep this leaflet safe, as you may need to refer to it again.
- Please ask your vet or veterinary nurse if you have any further questions.
- This medicine has been prescribed for your pet ONLY. Do not take it yourself or give it to another person or any other animal; it may harm them even if their symptoms appear to be the same.

This leaflet applies to a range of drugs that are inhaled through the mouth or nose. They include preparations that contain drugs that dilate the airways (bronchodilators) and steroids that reduce inflammation. Inhaled medications are sold under a variety of trade names.

How do I give inhaled medication to my pet?

Inhaled medications are not painful but your pet may find the administration of medication via a spacer (a plastic holding chamber that contains the gaseous medication) unpleasant at first. Try to administer the medication just before feeding or other normal activities that your pet enjoys. It is important to reinforce your pet's good behaviour with lots of praise. If at first your pet does not cooperate, be patient and try again a few minutes later. Even nervous pets will usually get used to the procedure. Speak to your vet if you encounter ongoing difficulties with administration.

- Wipe the spacer so that it is clean before use.
- Remove the cap and shake the inhaler vigorously and then insert the inhaler into the back of the spacer.
- For cats, hold them gently but firmly against your chest to aid administration.
- Apply the mask gently to your pet's face, ensuring both the nose and the mouth are covered.
- Press the inhaler to release the required amount of medication into the chamber.
- Keep the spacer applied to your pet's face as they take 7 to 10 breaths to ensure they breathe in all the medication that has been dispensed into the chamber. You can count the number of times the flap moves to see how your pet is breathing.



- Remove the mask, ensuring your pet receives plenty of positive reinforcement and praise.
- Wipe your pet's face with a cloth after treatment to remove any residue.
- Wipe the spacer device after use to ensure it is clean before storing.

Why has my pet been prescribed inhaled medication?

Your pet will have been prescribed inhaled medication to treat a respiratory condition. The most common conditions are feline asthma, chronic bronchitis and other lower airway disease, all of which can cause inflammation of the respiratory tract. Inhalers administer a metered dose of medication into the respiratory tract via the mouth and/or nose.

How should I store inhaled medication?

Inhalers and spacers do not require special storage conditions. As the spacer will be applied to your pet's face, ensure that it is stored somewhere clean and dry and ensure that the spacer is cleaned before and after use. **For safety, all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.** Return any unused or leftover medication to your vet practice for safe disposal.

How long will my pet require inhaled medication?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This varies between animals and can be for the rest of your pet's life. It is important that you complete the course of treatment even if your pet seems to be well. If your pet is still unwell at the end of the course, then you should contact your vet as soon as possible.

What should I do if I run out of inhaled medication?

Try not to run out of treatment. Make sure you order more from your vet if your supply is getting low. If you do run out, contact your own vet for further advice and restart the course as soon as possible.

The Prescribing Cascade

Some inhaled medications are authorized for use in dogs/cats/pets. However, on occasion, your veterinary surgeon will need to prescribe a medicine not authorized in veterinary species. In these cases, the medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is being used by vets under the 'prescribing cascade'. The medicine is not authorized by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), for use in dogs/cats/pets. Your vet can explain the 'prescribing cascade' in further detail to you and also explain why they are prescribing this drug for your pet. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you understand the reasons that the drug is being prescribed and its possible complications, before the treatment is issued.

While the editors and the BSAVA have made every effort in preparing this information leaflet, the contents and any statements are made in good faith purely for general guidance and cannot be regarded as substitute for professional advice. The publishers, contributors and the BSAVA do not take responsibility for the information provided on this leaflet and hence do not accept any liability for loss or expense incurred (by you or persons that you disseminate the materials to) as a result of relying on content in this leaflet. To this end, you are advised to consult your vet and seek their professional advice before taking any steps set out in this leaflet. If you are a vet, you must not rely on the contents in this leaflet without independently verifying the correctness and veracity of the contents. BSAVA is not responsible for any alterations made to this document from the version supplied.

What if multiple inhaled medications have been dispensed?

There are two main types of inhalers that can be prescribed for your pet: corticosteroids which reduce inflammation of the respiratory tract, and bronchodilators which relax the muscles of the airways and help your pet to breathe. Depending on your pet's condition, they may be prescribed one or both of these. Your vet will advise you on the frequency of each inhaler and when they need to be administered alongside each other.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

If a dose is missed, give the medication as soon as possible. However, it is best to skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your pet's next scheduled dose. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed dose and do not exceed the stated dose in any one 24-hour period.

What should I do if my pet is accidentally given too many doses?

Contact your vet immediately if your pet is given an overdose of inhaled medication. However, a single extra dose is unlikely to cause significant problems.

Can my pet receive inhaled medication if I am already giving them other drugs?

Tell your vet if you are giving your pet any other medications, even if you think they already know. This includes herbal or off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop, pharmacy or health store.

What are the possible side effects of inhaled medication for my pet?

If your pet shows any unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, please contact your vet. Any side effects depend on the dose, the length of treatment and the individual.

Whom do I contact if I want to know more?

If you have any questions about an inhaled medication, or concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about the specific medicine.