

# Using and looking after your nebulizer and compressor

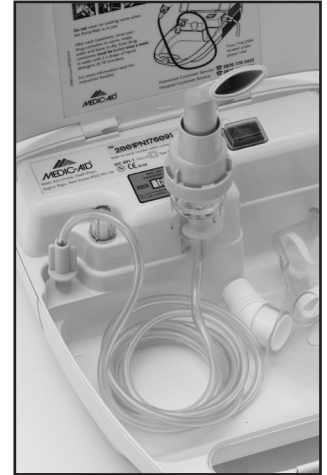
Information and advice for patients

## Respiratory

### What is a nebulizer and compressor?

A nebulizer is a device which is used to give medication in the form of a mist, which is breathed in to the lungs. A compressor is the machine which pumps air through the nebulizer to turn the liquid medication into a fine mist.

The most common medication given through a nebulizer is Ventolin (Salbutamol) which helps to open your airways so that breathing in and out is easier. Antibiotics to control lung infections can also be given through a nebulizer.



### What are the benefits of using a nebulizer and compressor?

The benefit of using a nebulizer and compressor is that they deliver a high dose of medicine to your lungs, higher than the dose of inhalers.

### Are there any risks to using a nebulizer and compressor?

There are no risks to using a nebulizer and compressor but, because they deliver a higher dose of drug compared to inhalers, you may experience more side-effects from the medication such as fast heart rate or trembling hands. These effects will wear off as you become used to the higher dose.

### Are there any alternatives to using a nebulizer and compressor?

An alternative to using a nebulizer and compressor is to have your medication through an inhaler. However if you have antibiotics through your nebulizer, these cannot be given through an inhaler.

### How to use your nebulizer and compressor

The respiratory nurses will show you how to set up your nebulizer and compressor. This is what you will need to do:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Connect the lead to the socket on the compressor and then plug it into your plug socket.



3. Connect the nebulizer to the compressor with the tubing. Make sure it is pushed on firmly.

4. Take out the plastic vials of medication from the pack. Pull off a single dose by twisting it down and away from you.



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5. Open the vial by holding the top tightly and twisting it.
6. Empty the medication into the nebulizer by squeezing the vial slowly. Make sure all the contents are emptied out. If you use more than one medicine, for example Salbutamol and Atrovent, you can use these together – empty them both into the nebulizer.
7. Connect either the mouthpiece or the mask to the top of the nebulizer.



8. Switch the compressor on. A fine mist will be produced for you to breathe in through a mask or mouthpiece.
9. Sit comfortably in an upright position, relax and breathe gently while you are using the nebulizer. Do not try to breathe quickly. The treatment should not be hard work. If you need to take a short break from using the nebulizer you can switch off the compressor and put it back on again when you are ready.
10. After about 5 minutes the nebulizer will begin to 'spit'. This means the treatment is finished. When this happens, switch off the compressor and disconnect the nebulizer.
11. Wash your nebulizer (see instructions below).

Do not share your nebulizer and compressor with anyone else; it is for you only.

## **Cleaning and caring for your nebulizer and compressor**

It is essential to keep your nebulizer and compressor system clean and in good working order to get the best effect from the medication. After you have used your nebulizer a small amount of the medication will remain in it, which can crystallise and block the nebulizer if it is not cleaned. This will stop your nebulizer from working properly.

### **After each time you use the nebulizer**

1. Remove the tubing and the mouthpiece or mask from the nebulizer.
2. Unscrew the nebulizer.
3. Wash the nebulizer and mouthpiece/mask in hot soapy water and rinse them under hot running water to clear the fine jet holes.
4. Dry the nebulizer and mouthpiece/mask with a clean cloth, or leave them in a dry place.

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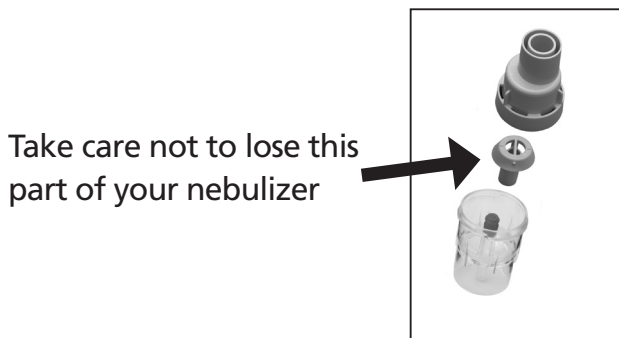
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It is essential that the nebulizer parts are completely dried before they are put back together as moisture could cause germs to grow in them.

5. Wipe the compressor with a damp cloth.

### **Once a week**

Once a week you need to sterilise your nebulizer pot by boiling it in hot water, with 2 drops of washing up liquid, for 6 – 10 minutes. You can also boil the mouthpiece but do not boil your mask or the tubing.



### **Once every 3 months**

The inlet filter on the compressor needs to be changed every 3 months. To do this, unscrew the clear cover which is over the filter and remove the old filter. Replace the filter & screw the plastic cover back into place. Do not screw it on too tightly as it will be difficult to remove next time. If it is not changed the filter will become blocked and your compressor will not work as well.

### **Once every 12 months**

The compressor needs to be serviced and safety-checked every 12 months to make sure it is working properly and giving you your medicine efficiently. The respiratory nurses will arrange for your compressor to be serviced. You will need to arrange for someone to bring the nebuliser and compressor to the Chest Clinic at Sandwell Hospital for this, and will be given a replacement one to take home with you.

### **Replacement parts**

The respiratory nurses will supply you with replacement filters for the compressor, masks/ mouthpieces, nebulizer pots and tubing. You will be provided with everything you need for 12 months .

Please remember that the compressor is only on loan to you and will be used by another patient when you have finished with it. Please return your compressor to us in the same condition you received it. Remember to include the electrical lead.

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### **How to store your nebulizer and compressor**

Keep your compressor on a firm surface, not on the floor or carpet. Cold dusty air will be drawn into the machine if it is kept on the carpet or the floor.

### **Contact details**

To arrange for your compressor and nebuliser to be serviced or if it is broken please contact the Chest Clinic at Sandwell Hospital and ask to speak to one of the nurses.

#### **Chest Clinic**

0121 507 3151

Monday – Friday, 8am – 5pm (excluding bank holidays)

If you have a problem with your nebuliser outside of working hours please use your blue inhaler in place of the nebuliser and contact the Chest Clinic as soon as it is open.

If you are unable to manage without the nebuliser you can contact the Community Respiratory Team who may be able to loan you one until the Chest Clinic is open.

#### **Community Respiratory Team**

0121 612 2007

Monday – Friday, 8am – 8pm

Saturday & Sunday, 8.30am – 4.30pm

### **Further information**

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk) and [www.swbhengage.com](http://www.swbhengage.com), follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](http://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).

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### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- European Respiratory Society Task Force, 'European Respiratory Society Guidelines on the use of nebulizers', 2001
- British National Formulary, section 3.1.5 'Peak flow meters, inhaler devices and nebulisers', January 2013

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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