

ALERT

Find out more... visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org

THE NEW HFA INHALER by Charles B. Primous, RPH

Metered Dose Inhalers or MDIs are an important part of most asthma action plans. If you use a MDI, you may need to talk to your doctor soon about changing to a new kind of MDI. MDIs contain a medicine, such as albuterol, mixed with gases to help push the medicine from the canister deep into your airways. There, the medicine works to quickly relieve asthma symptoms such as wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness. The gases that drug makers currently use are called chlorofluorocarbons or CFCs.

CFCs have been used for the past 50 years, ever since metered dose inhalers were first developed. Although CFCs in MDIs have been shown to be safe for people to inhale, CFCs are harmful to the environment. Scientists have found that when CFCs get into the upper parts of the earth's atmosphere, they cut down the amount of ozone in the ozone layer that is all around the earth. The ozone layer helps protect the earth from harmful rays of light from the sun. To lower the risk of health and environmental problems caused by less ozone, and to help restore the ozone layer, most countries have agreed to stop using CFCs, even in MDIs. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has ruled that MDIs that have CFCs cannot be sold in the United States after December 31, 2008.

Drug companies have been working for a long time on the problem and have developed the next generation of MDIs. These MDIs use a different gas called hydrofluoroalkane or HFA. HFA is a safe, effective, and environmentally friendly alternative to CFC MDIs, and they use the same asthma medication. While the medicine is the same, there are some differences between the two, such as taste and the force of the spray. Also, HFA inhalers have different cleaning instructions. Ask your doctor, asthma educator or pharmacist if you have any questions about this new type of medicine.

There can be a big price difference between the CFC MDIs and the new HFA MDIs. The HFA inhalers will cost anywhere from \$30 to \$60, compared with \$5 to \$25 for a generic CFC inhaler. The price is predicted to come down over the next few years, but if you need assistance now, it is available. For the latest assistance programs and coupon offers, call the American Lung Association Lung Help Line at 1-800-LUNG-USA, and press "2" to speak to a nurse or respiratory therapist.

It is important to start changing from your CFC inhaler to the new HFA inhaler soon. Over the next few years, drug manufacturers will gradually reduce or stop production of the old CFC inhalers and produce only the HFA inhalers. Now is also a good time to talk with your doctor about finding the inhaler or other asthma medicine that works best for you. Make sure to tell your doctor how often you are using your inhaler, and if you think your asthma is not getting better.

By changing over to the HFA inhaler, you are helping to protect the environment while managing your asthma. ❄

Charles Primous, RPH is a clinical pharmacist at Harper Hospital in Detroit. With over 30 years experience in the field, he has worked for the Detroit Medical Center for the past 15 years.

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HFA inhalers are very similar to CFC inhalers, but there are some differences.

HFA Inhalers:

- ❄ Are ozone-friendly to the environment.
- ❄ May be slightly different in smell and taste.
- ❄ May have a less forceful and warmer mist.
- ❄ May need to be cleaned and cared for differently.

Source: CFC-Free Inhalers: Time to Make the Switch, 2006, American Lung Association, www.lungusa.org/cfcfree



ASTHMA COALITION COLUMN



Focus on: Detroit Alliance for Asthma Awareness

The Detroit Alliance of Asthma Awareness (the Alliance) is the newest of the 11 independent asthma coalitions in Michigan. Since September 2004, the Alliance has been working to provide asthma education and management programs for the city of Detroit.

The Alliance provides these programs and services for children and adults with a particular focus on the uninsured and under-insured asthma population and those considered high-risk. In addition to people with asthma, education and outreach activities include health care personnel (including those in the schools), community-based organizations, children, parents, faith-based organizations, school personnel, day care providers, employers, managed care organizations, housing agencies, and policy makers.

Dr. Joyce Keith Hargrove, the chairperson for the Alliance, is dedicated to the coalition's mission. "It is our goal to reduce the number of asthma episodes that result in emergency room department visits, hospitalizations, and missed school or work days. Ultimately, the Alliance will strive to improve the quality of life for people with asthma."

Want to find out more about the Detroit Alliance for Asthma Awareness? Need to find an asthma coalition near you? Visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org and click on Coalitions. ❄️

Please direct questions and comments about this newsletter to:

MI Asthma Communication Network
c/o American Lung Assoc. of Michigan
403 Seymour Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933-1179
phone: 1-866-395-8647
e-mail: info@GetAsthmaHelp.org

WINTER ASTHMA TIP: New Years Resolutions and Asthma

Happy New Year! 2007 is here and with it is another list of New Year's resolutions. The good news is that a few of your resolutions can help you manage your and your child's asthma better.



Resolution: A More Healthful Diet for Your Family

Recent studies have shown that a diet with plenty of whole grains and fish may reduce the risk of developing asthma in children. Another study showed that whole grains and fish might help you to reduce your exercise-induced asthma.

Resolution: Exercise!

Even though it can trigger asthma in some people, exercise is a great way to get in shape and improve airway function. Work with your doctor to make an action plan that helps keep you active!

Resolution: Clean House

Regular dusting and cleaning can help keep dust bunnies and asthma symptoms at a minimum. Remember to wash your bed linen in hot water and seal any leaks in your kitchen or bathroom to prevent mold. ❄️

ADVOCACY UPDATE: Smokefree Apartments - It's Your Right!

If you rent an apartment and your neighbors smoke, it might feel like you are smoking too. It is possible for your neighbors' second hand smoke to invade your home and hurt your health, especially if you have asthma. You have the right to a smokefree home. If you would like more information about making your apartment building smokefree, please visit www.MISmokefreeApartment.org for tips and suggestions.

Smoke-free apartment policies are permitted under both federal and Michigan laws, and there is no such thing as "the right to smoke." ❄️

MI ASTHMA CALENDAR

February

- 8 **The ABC'S of Asthma**
St. Joseph Mercy Women's Health Center, Ypsilanti, \$30 and must pre-register, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., for more info: 734-712-5800
- 8- **Great Lakes Region Asthma Forum.**
- 9 **Renaissance O'Hare, Chicago, IL.,** \$35 and must pre-register, for more info, visit: www.epa.gov/region5/air/radon/asthmaforum/glasthmaforum07.html
- 12 **Asthma Information Review (AIR) Course**
Washtenaw Intermediate School District Teaching and Learning Center, Ann Arbor, 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m., for more info: 734-677-6772
- 25 **Climb Detroit! American Lung Association of Michigan Fundraiser**
Marriott Detroit at the Renaissance Center, Detroit, \$35 for registration, 7:30am, for more info: www.climbdetroit.com

March

- 31 **Emerging Science in Asthma and Allergy Management**
VistaTech Center at Schoolcraft College, Livonia, \$25 and must pre-register, 10:00 a.m. to 2 p.m., for more info: 888-444-0333

April

- 17 **Summit of Michigan Asthma Coalitions**
Henry Center, Lansing, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., free but must pre-register, for more info: 517-484-7206



Support the American Lung Association of Michigan in May...to find a Blow the Whistle on Asthma Walk near you, call 1-800-Lung USA or visit www.asthmawalk.org