

# Nebulizer Treatments



Allina Health



## **What is a Nebulizer Treatment?**

A nebulizer (“neb machine”) gives medicine as a fine mist that is breathed into the lungs. Nebulizer treatments (“nebs”) must be given as instructed by your child’s health care provider in order for them to work.

Often, medicines can be mixed together in a neb. If you are giving more than one medicine in the neb, check with the health care provider or pharmacist about mixing the medicines together.

## **How Do You Prepare Your Child?**

Some children may not like the neb treatment at first but will get used to it after continuing treatment. Some ways to help your child cope with nebs at home are:

- Explain what you are going to do before you do it.
- Set up a routine with the nebs.
- Hold your child in your lap or play with a toy during treatment.
- Let your child choose a distraction, such as reading a book together, rocking with a parent, or listening to music.
- Let your child play with the mask and a doll or stuffed animal between treatments.
- Let your child help get the treatment ready, get a book to read, or hold the mask.
- You or your child may have other ideas.

## How Do You Set Up the Nebulizer

Place the machine on a level surface. It may vibrate during use, so keep it away from the edge of the table. Keep it off the floor for good air circulation and to keep the filter clean longer.

1. Plug the power cord into a 3-prong outlet.
2. Wash your hands.
3. Put the prescribed amounts of medicine(s) into the neb cup. Add normal saline, if prescribed.
4. Put the top on the neb cup and attach a facemask or mouthpiece depending on the age of the child.
  - For infants, toddlers and young children: use a facemask.
  - For older children and teenagers: use a mouthpiece.
5. Connect one end of the air tubing to the machine and the other to the bottom of the neb cup.

## How Do You Give the Neb?

1. First, check the peak flow rate, if instructed by your child's health care provider. Write this number in your child's peak flow diary or asthma management plan.
2. Turn on the neb machine.
3. Hold the neb cup in an upright position for the whole treatment.
  - Facemask: if the mask bothers your child, you do not have to put the strap over the head. You can start with the facemask off the face and move it closer gradually until the mask is over the mouth and nose.

- Mouthpiece: place it over the tongue and between the teeth. You should be able to see the mist at the opposite end disappear as your child breathes in. He or she may need to pinch his or her nose to remember to breathe in through the mouth.
  - Deep breaths are best if your child will cooperate. Have your child hold each breath for 2 or 3 seconds.
4. Stop the neb treatment if your child has hand tremors, vomiting (throwing up), dizziness or a headache. Otherwise, continue until all of the medicine is gone from the neb cup (about 10 minutes). You will hear a sputter and notice a decrease in the amount of mist coming out. When this happens, tap on the neb cup gently to get the rest of the medicine back to the bottom of the neb cup.
  5. After the neb treatment is finished, check the peak flow rate again if instructed by your child's health care provider. Write this number in your child's peak flow diary or asthma management plan.
  6. Clean the neb cup and its attachments according to the following instructions. (Do not put them in the dishwasher.)

## **How Should You Take Care of the Equipment?**

### **After each treatment:**

1. Take apart the neb cup and attachments.
2. Place them on a clean paper towel, tilted so that moisture drains out of the cup sections. Cover with another paper towel to keep dust off.
3. Do not rinse nebulizer cups with tap water between treatments. Tap water may contain bacteria, and if the parts do not fully dry between treatments, they could be contaminated.

### **Every day:**

1. After the last treatment of the day, wash with warm, soapy water (using well-dissolved Dreft® or a liquid detergent).
2. Rinse well with warm water and let air dry on a clean towel.

### **Every week:**

1. Wash the parts with warm, soapy water as above. Rinse well with warm water.
2. Mix one-half cup white vinegar with 2 cups water.
3. Soak the parts in vinegar-and-water solution for 30 minutes (throw away the vinegar mixture after use).
4. Rinse the parts with warm tap water and let air-dry.
5. Unplug the nebulizer and wipe the outside surfaces with a clean, damp cloth. Do not put it in water. Keep the machine covered when not in use.
6. Check the filter. Change or clean the filter, following the instructions that came with the nebulizer machine.
7. Replace supplies as needed. You should always have an extra neb cup, tubing, and set of attachments on hand.

## **Problem-solving**

### **Mask bothers your child**

Try the ways to prepare your child listed on page 1. Toddlers or infants who do not cooperate with the treatment may receive more of the medicine if the neb is given with the blow-by directing flow. (Holding the mouthpiece close to the child's mouth or nose, allowing the child to breathe the medicine in.)

## **Mist coming out of the machine is poor**

1. Check that the air tubing is not kinked or loosely connected to the nebulizer or neb cup.
2. Check the neb cup. (A cup usually lasts 2 or 3 weeks, depending on how often it is used.)
  - If it leaks, make sure it is screwed together tightly.
  - if it continues to leak, replace it.
3. Check that the filter is not plugged (change filter if needed).

## **Nebulizer does not turn on**

1. Check to see if the nebulizer is plugged in.
2. Check to see if there is power to the outlet.
3. If the nebulizer is cold, let it warm to room temperature.
4. If it still does not work, call the supply company.

## **Whom To Call for Help**

### **Call your child's health care provider if:**

- you do not understand why your child needs neb treatments
- you or your child are not comfortable with neb treatments
- the neb treatments are not helping your child's breathing
- your child needs extra treatments for more than 12 to 24 hours or other guidelines in the asthma management plan.

### **Call the equipment company if:**

- you need to order supplies
- the nebulizer does not work.



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