

Managing your child's viral wheeze

Children's Emergency Department

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Information for Patients, Parents & Carers

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What is a viral induced wheeze?

A wheeze is a high pitched whistle that happens as you breathe out through narrowed airways. In children, viruses can make their airways inflamed and narrow, causing that noise.

The illness often starts with cold-like symptoms, and then the child develops a wheeze. Sometimes children have so much difficulty breathing that they stop drinking or talking.

It's not the same as asthma, and most children will grow out of it.

How can it be treated?

We use drugs that open up the airways. For most children this will be salbutamol (also known by the brand name Ventolin), which usually comes in a blue inhaler. Unless your child also needs oxygen, giving salbutamol through a spacer device is as effective as using a mask that delivers the drug as a mist (nebuliser).

Sometimes we use other inhalers, and very occasionally we give medication through a drip if your child is very sick.

Antibiotic medicines do not work on viruses, and do not help with treating wheeze, so they are not recommended.

Steroids aren't usually used as they won't help most children, but sometimes we try them in children who get sick very often, or who are very poorly.

The medications we use are safe, but if children need a lot of salbutamol, they might get quite hyperactive or shaky with a fast heartbeat. This will improve once we reduce the medication.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

When can my child go home?

Your child will be ready to go home once they only need an inhaler every 3 to 4 hours. How long this will take can vary from hours to days, and can be difficult to predict. We will only keep your child in hospital for as long as they need to be here.

How should I care for my child at home?

The healthcare professional who saw you will give you a wheeze plan. This will tell you how often to use the inhaler and how much to give at a time.

If your child is also suffering from other symptoms of a cold, they will benefit from drinking plenty of fluids and resting.

Exposing your child to tobacco smoke, even on clothes, will make their symptoms worse and more likely to come back. Try to keep your children away from smoke, especially when they are wheezy. If you need advice on giving up smoking, please speak to a member of staff, your GP or visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/>

What should I do next time?

Having more than 1 episode of viral induced wheeze is not uncommon, but that doesn't mean you have to come into hospital every time. If you use the inhaler early, it's often possible to manage this at home.

At the start of a cold, give 2 to 6 puffs of salbutamol through a spacer if needed, no more than every 4 hours.

Always use the spacer device with the inhaler, as the medicine won't work as effectively without it. Remember that there is around 200 puffs in each inhaler and they do run out.

If your child is coughing or wheezing more than usual, give 6 puffs of salbutamol through a spacer every 4 hours. See your GP if your child is not getting better with this treatment.

When should I call an ambulance?

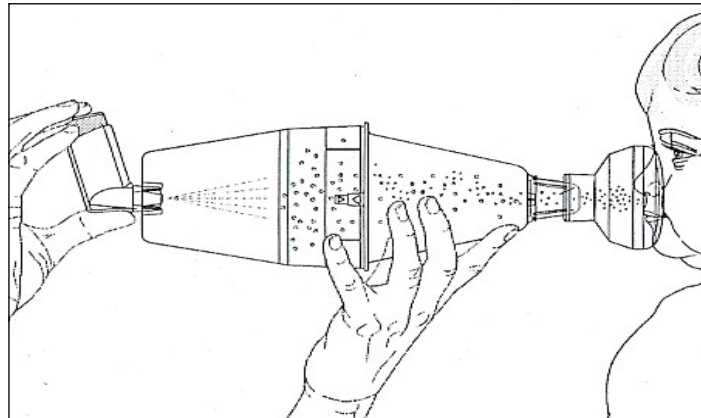
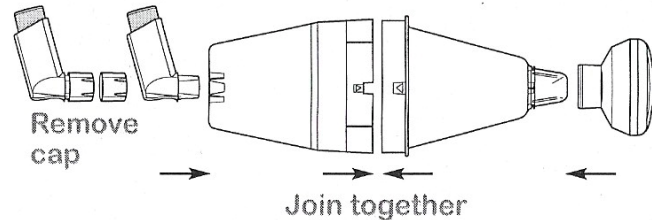
Sometimes children get sick very quickly whatever you do, and you will need to come to hospital urgently. If your child has previously had a wheeze and has any of the symptoms below, give 10 puffs of the blue inhaler through a spacer and call 999.

Continue to give 1 puff every minute until help arrives:

- Too breathless to drink or talk.
- Rapid breathing rate.
- Pulling in of muscles at the neck or between the ribs.
- Floppy or unresponsive.
- Lips turning blue.
- Grunting noises when breathing.

How to use the inhaler with a Volumatic spacer

1. Join the 2 halves of the Volumatic spacer together and attach the mask to the mouthpiece of the spacer.
2. Remove the cap from the inhaler, shake the inhaler and insert the inhaler into the end of the Volumatic spacer.
3. Place the mask over your child's nose and mouth. Make sure there is a good seal over the nose and mouth, then press down on the canister in the inhaler to release **1** dose of the medication (**do not give more than 1 puff at a time**).
4. Keep the mask in place for 5 to 6 breaths in and out, or to the count of 10 to allow as much of the medicine to go into the lungs as possible. If your child is breathing fast, leave on for 10 to 15 seconds.



5. After every 2 puffs of inhaler are given, it is important to remove the inhaler and shake it, before inserting it again into the Volumatic spacer to give further doses.

How do I clean my Volumatic spacer?

You should clean your Volumatic spacer every 4 weeks using the steps below:

1. Separate the 2 halves of the Volumatic spacer.
2. Wash the 2 halves in warm water that contains a mild detergent.
3. Leave to dry at room temperature. Do not use a cloth.

Contact details

If you have any concerns you can contact the NHS helpline on 111 for advice.

Giving us your feedback

We would love to get some feedback on your visit today.

Use your smart phone to scan this QR code for quick access to our online feedback survey form.



Alternatively, you can access the feedback form from our website:

<https://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/patients/thinking-of-choosing-us/patient-experience/>

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على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

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