

Why your Doctor orders a nebulizer?

A nebulizer is ordered when you are having some “wheezing” and difficulty in coughing up mucous. The “wheezing” is a result of your breathing tubes or airways becoming tighter or smaller in diameter. You also have more mucous than normal that adds to the problem when you try to cough up the mucous through tight breathing tubes. The Nebulizer turns the liquid medication your Doctor ordered into a fine mist and you breathe it into your lungs. This medication will help open up those tight breathing tubes and allow you to get more air in and out of your lungs. It will also help to loosen up the mucous and make coughing more effective because the breathing tubes are not as tight. It is easier to get more air “behind” the mucous because you can breathe deeper and cough more effectively because the breathing tubes are open and more air can flow through them. Remember, the only way to cough up mucous is by using the air in your lungs to force it out. If you can’t take a good deep breath and produce a forceful cough, the mucous will not come up and you will not be able to cough effectively. If you can’t cough the mucous up, you are increasing your risk of infection. Mucous is a good place for bacteria to grow so you see effective coughing is very important in avoiding lung infections.

There are many different kinds of breathing medications but most of them work in a similar way. A “bronchodilator” opens up your breathing tubes. One type relaxes the muscles that surround the tubes (usually lasts 3-4hrs. i.e. Albuterol – Proventil, and Ventolin). By relaxing the muscles, the tubes are not as tight and will allow more air to get in and out of your lungs. This will make it easier for you to have a more effective cough. The other type of medication also opens up your breathing tubes but it blocks the chemicals that cause the breathing tubes to tighten up (usually last 4-6hrs. i.e. Atrovent). Some times these medications are ordered together and actually work better together than separately.



It is very important that you follow your Doctors orders for using your nebulizer. Both the medication and how often you take the medication are important in managing your breathing problems. Always take your treatments as your Doctor ordered them for you.

Why did this happen to me?

Usually but not always people need breathing treatments because of some type of long term exposure to smoking and/or environmental pollutants. After years of exposing your lung to smoking, dust, chemicals, etc., your lungs make more mucous to get rid of the irritant, the mucous results in more infections, and the infections cause more damage. This long term damage leaves you with a condition often diagnosed as COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease). You cannot reverse this process but you can minimize any further damage by following your Doctors orders including continuing the breathing treatments even if you feel better and you don’t think you need them.

[Checklist Reverse Side >](#)



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How can I better live with my disease?

#1 Stop Smoking!

Smoking causes irritation in you lungs. When the lungs become irritated they produce more mucous. The additional mucous can lead to increased infection. Smoking also causes your normal mucous clearing system to slow down and become less effective. Now you have more mucous and you can't cough it up easily. The frequent infections cause damage to you lungs and the process continues and additional damage occurs. If you stop smoking, the damage that has been done can't be reversed but, you can minimize any additional damage from occurring.

#2 Follow Your Doctors Order!

Always check with your Doctor first before you change anything with your breathing treatments and medication. Other things you can do are:

- Avoid public places or wear a mask during Flu season. Ask relatives that have the Flu or a bad cold to stay away or have them wear a mask when they come to visit.
- At the first sign of a respiratory infection (excessive coughing, yellow/green mucous) contact your Doctor.
- During the winter months make sure there is an adequate amount of humidity in your home. Dry air will make your mucous thick and more difficult to cough up. If you have a furnace humidifier or a free standing room humidifier, make sure it is working properly and it is clean. A dirty humidifier could be blowing bacteria back into your environment.
- In the summer time avoid going out when the humidity is very high and air pollution alerts are announced. Stay inside with the air conditioning on.
- Change your breathing medication cups every two weeks and clean them as instructed. If you use a "puffer" (metered dose inhaler) make sure it is always capped when you are not using it and rinse it out periodically to clear out any debris or dirt that may have accumulated in it from being in your purse or pocket.
- If you use a "puffer" when you are away from you medication nebulizer, Check with your Doctor about using a "spacer" to make sure you are actually getting the medication. If you can taste the medication when you are using your "puffer", it is not getting in your lungs where you need it to go to be effective. A "spacer" will hold the mist in the chamber and allow you to breathe it into your lung for an effective treatment.
- Drink plenty of fluids, drinking water will keep you well hydrated and help keep your secretions thin and easier to cough up.
- Avoid eating foods that produce excess gas. When you are bloated, it is more difficult to breathe because your stomach is pushing up on your diaphragm and you can't take a deep breath. Eat smaller amounts more frequently instead of one or two large meals.
- Check with your Doctor to see if an exercise program is right for you.