



Changing Your Puffer: Better for You, Better for the Planet

Why should I switch puffers?

1. You might be using a puffer called a metered-dose inhaler (MDI). MDIs are difficult to use properly. Even if you have a puffer with 2 or 3 medications in it, your lungs may not be getting the full benefit.
2. MDIs are harmful to the environment because they release greenhouse gases into the air, which contributes to global warming.
3. If you have asthma, you may be using a “quick-relief” puffer with only 1 medication in it. Asthma guidelines currently recommend a puffer that has 2 medications in it for most people with asthma:
 - A medication that calms irritation (inflammation) in your lungs

AND

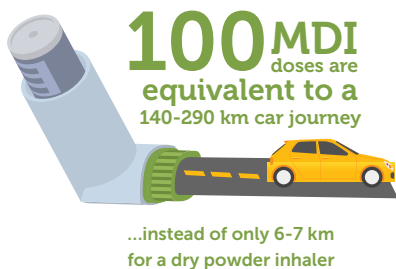
 - A medication that opens your airways quickly and has a long-lasting effect

People who only use a quick-relief inhaler or who need to use it more than 2 times a week may need to go to the emergency room or hospital more often. They are also at a higher risk for serious asthma attacks.

Is there a better type of puffer?

Newer types of puffers include dry powder inhalers (DPIs) and soft mist inhalers. These may have 1, 2 or even 3 medications in the puffer. They are easier to use correctly and they are much safer for the environment.

Your health team will help figure out what type of puffer is right for you.



What if I am not able to switch from my MDI puffer?

There are other ways you can help to improve your breathing and protect the environment.

- **Take your puffer medications regularly, not just “as needed.”** If you are using your quick-relief puffer more than 2 times per week, talk with your health care team.
- **Use your puffer correctly:** 70% of Canadians have trouble using their puffer correctly. Ask your pharmacist or doctor/nurse to check how you are using your inhaler. The Canadian Lung Association offers information and videos to help you use your type of puffer: <https://www.lung.ca/lung-health/how-use-your-inhaler>.
- **Spacer devices:** These can help you get the most benefit from your puffer, and reduce your need for “quick-relief.” Ask your health care team more about what spacer device is best for you.
- **Ask for a better MDI:** There are several MDIs called “low volume” which are better for the environment and may be right for you.
- **Dispose of your puffer safely, once it is empty.**
 - Make sure that your puffer canister is completely empty before starting a new one. You can do this by counting your doses. Floating the puffer in water is **not** a good way to check if it is empty.
 - Return empty puffers to a pharmacy to dispose of them correctly. This way, toxins left in the canister do not go into the earth and air at a landfill site. You can also check the Health Products Stewardship Association website for a collection location near you: <https://healthsteward.ca/consumers/returning-medications/>.

