



Medications at Home: Albuterol (Proventil, Ventolin)

The neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) team celebrates with you as your baby goes home! After graduation from the NICU, your baby will need medication to stay well.

Why does my baby need this medication?

- Albuterol is used to prevent and treat shortness of breath, wheezing, and chest tightening caused by obstructive lung disease (chronic lung disease).
- This fast-acting, emergency drug (rescue medicine) acts to relax and open the airways of the lungs.

How, how much, and when is this medication given to my baby?

- Albuterol is given with a special machine called a *nebulizer* that turns liquid medication into a mist. Your baby will breathe in the mist from a face mask. Be careful not to get the mist in your baby's eyes. Nebulizer treatments take about 10–20 minutes to complete. The NICU team will teach you how to use the nebulizer.
- Some babies may use an inhaler. Always follow the directions given to you by your baby's team about how to administer the medication, including the use of a spacer if it is provided. Shake well before use.
- The amount of medicine to give has been carefully calculated based on your baby's weight and needed response from the medicine. Do not change the dosage without talking to your baby's provider.
- Dose Instructions: _____

What are the possible side effects?

- Increased heartbeat
- Tremor
- Restlessness (fussiness)
- Dry nose and throat
- Nosebleed

Call your baby's provider right away if your baby has

- fast, pounding, irregular heartbeat
- rash or hives
- problems swallowing
- swelling of face, throat, tongue, lips, eyes, hands, feet, ankles, or lower legs
- hoarse voice
- increased shortness of breath, wheezing, and increased work of breathing.

What if my baby misses a dose?

- Give the missed dose as soon as you remember it. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and stick to the regular medication schedule.
- Never give a double dose.
- Call your baby's provider if your baby misses two or more doses.

Important Medication Safety Tips

- Only give your baby medicine prescribed by your baby's provider. Do not share prescription medicines with other children or adults.
- Check with your baby's provider before giving your baby any over-the-counter medicines.
- Keep all medicines out of reach of children, closed tightly in the bottles or containers they came in, and with the labels of directions given by the pharmacy.
- Give albuterol exactly as directed by your baby's provider.



- Never stop albuterol or give more or less than prescribed without first talking with your baby’s provider. Too little may not be enough to help, and too much may cause harm. In the case of an overdose, immediately call the Poison Control Center at 800.222.1222. If you cannot wake your baby or he or she has stopped breathing, start cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and call your local emergency medical services (EMS) or 911 right away.
- Optionally, you may store albuterol in the refrigerator.
- If your baby also uses an inhaled steroid, such as budesonide (Pulmicort), give albuterol first to open the airways.
 - If your baby is receiving more than one inhaled medication, do not mix them together for the nebulizer unless specifically instructed to do so by your baby’s provider.
- If your baby has severe difficulty breathing or stops breathing, start CPR and call your local EMS or 911 right away.
- Always use the five *rights* when giving medicines to your baby:
 - Right baby (if other children are in the home)
 - Right medication
 - Right amount (always measure the dose with the syringe or dropper provided by the pharmacy, not a common household teaspoon)
 - Right time
 - Right way (exactly as prescribed and directed by your baby’s provider).

The above information is to help you better understand your baby’s care. Always follow the instructions given by your baby’s provider and pharmacist. It’s always OK to ask questions if you have concerns about your baby. Clean your nebulizer regularly. Follow the manufacturer’s directions carefully and ask your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about cleaning your nebulizer. Albuterol inhalation sometimes causes wheezing and difficulty breathing immediately after it is inhaled. If this happens, call your doctor right away. Do not use albuterol inhalation again unless your doctor instructs you to do so.

Online Resources

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

HealthFinder.gov
www.healthfinder.gov

Institute for Safe Medication Practices
www.consumermedsafety.org

Kids Health
www.kidshealth.org

Medline Plus: Drug Information
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/meds

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
www.fda.gov