Hey! Why has my inhaler changed?
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By now, many of you have come across the change that is occurring with albuterol inhalers. These inhalers, also known as “rescue” or “quick relief” inhalers, have used chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) to deliver medicine into your lungs. CFCs are safe for you, but they are harmful to the environment.

Although it may not seem likely that the small amount of CFCs in an asthma inhaler might damage the environment, scientists have learned that these CFCs damage the ozone layer in the earth's stratosphere, letting more of the sun's harmful UV rays pass through and reach the earth’s surface. This leads to increased risk of skin cancer for us all. In order to protect the environment, the FDA issued a mandate in 2005 requiring that CFC albuterol inhalers be entirely removed from the market by December 31, 2008. As a result, all rescue inhalers will be changed to the HFA propellant soon.

When the new HFA inhalers were designed, they were engineered to have a similar look, feel, and use as the CFC inhalers to which patients with asthma had become accustomed. It is important to know that HFA inhalers contain the same medicine and are just as effective as the previous CFC inhalers. Only the chemical that delivers the medicine to the lungs has changed. Some patients find that the HFA inhaler has a slightly different taste and feel (the sensation of the HFA spray will be less forceful than what you were used to with the CFC inhaler), but be reassured that studies have demonstrated that these new inhalers are just as effective. These new inhalers have passed strict FDA standards for safety and efficacy. Many of these studies were conducted here in the Study Department at Colorado Allergy and Asthma Centers.

You will not be able to use your current CFC inhaler prescription for an HFA inhaler at the pharmacy but will need a new prescription for an HFA inhaler from your doctor. It is likely that the HFA inhaler will cost more as there are no generic versions available yet. The HFA inhalers cost from $30 to $60, compared with $5 to $25 for a generic CFC inhaler.

Additionally, HFA inhalers have specific cleaning instructions that can be found in the information provided with the product or by asking our staff.

Use your next appointment with your allergist to discuss this transition to HFA inhalers. Also, use this opportunity to discuss your Asthma Management Plan so that you can be assured that you are doing everything possible to keep your asthma under good control.

HFA VERSUS CFC INHALERS
How They Are the Same How HFA Is Different
Safe and effective for asthma use Ozone-friendly to the environment
Shape is similar May be slightly different in smell and taste
Size is similar Mist is less forceful and warmer
Convenient to use May need to be cleaned and cared for differently

Cleaning Your Inhaler
• Look at the inhaler’s tiny hole through which the medication sprays.
• If there is powder or other residue in or around the hole, it is time to clean your inhaler.
• Remove the canister from the L-shaped plastic mouthpiece.
• Rinse the mouthpiece and cap in warm water.
• Let the mouthpiece and cap dry all day or overnight.
• After the mouthpiece and cap have dried, put the canister back inside the mouthpiece and the cap back on the inhaler.