

Asthma Insider

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How Does Your Inhaler Measure Up?

Having asthma in the home is as common as having a vacuum cleaner. Do you ever notice that the more you run a vacuum cleaner, the more it becomes worn out? After a while it starts coughing up dust and it has a hard time sucking things up into its air intake valve. Maybe our vacuum cleaner has asthma, too! All kidding aside, asthma is no joke and when it hits, you can't afford to wait around for the punch-line—it's nothing to laugh about.

When an asthma attack occurs, what do you do? Do you call the ambulance, load up the car and drive to the local hospital, or grab your trusty inhaler? Asthma goes back for centuries, and though the first form of an inhaler appeared in 1778, it wasn't until 1957 when the first modern inhaler—a portable pocket size—was invented. As time went on, more inhalers were invented

and different medications went into them.

Some were given the name "rescue" inhalers because they contained salbutamol, a fast-acting drug which Ventolin falls under.

Then there are the "preventive" inhalers that help you manage your asthma. These inhalers contain steroids and nedocromil, which include medications like Pro Air and Budesonide. But with every medical resource comes a medical side effect. Let's see how this "fresh air in a bottle" can actually take our breath away with its side effects.

Whether you use Ventolin, Pro-Air, Proventil, Alupent, or any other inhaler, you can be assured that some of the medicine it contains may come

with an allergic reaction. CFC inhalers such as Alupent or the ever-so-popular over-the-counter Primatene mist had the capability to deplete the ozone layer. These inhalers were eventually removed from the shelves and out of doctor's offices. Most doctors now use HFA inhalers. Some, like Xopenex, carry fewer side effects, but like the others, they may come with some side effects like headaches, nausea, runny nose, or even muscle pains. While common, Ventolin can cause dry mouth, which may accompany thrush or hoarseness in the throat, affecting the voice. It is best to rinse after every use. These inhalers can also cause shakiness due to an accelerated heartbeat. Sudden movements of the hands and feet can also be symptoms of side effects occurring in your body. Other side effects that may occur but are very rare include sudden coughing attacks, anxiety, agitation, or even

restlessness. Pro-Air is one of the only inhalers that can last up to two years and doesn't require priming when

When an asthma attack occurs, what do you?

dropped or not used for some time. But

because Pro-Air uses a solvent called ethanol, which isn't found in Ventolin or Proventil,

it can also cause dizziness or insomnia. Pro-Air may also cause hives or redness of the skin, and some patients that were switched to this inhaler complained of tightening of the chest followed by additional wheezing. In its defense, it is considered a managing or maintenance medication.

Many people prefer Ventolin over Pro-Air because Pro-Air uses ethanol, but they also claim that Pro-Air constricts their airways and doesn't help their breathing

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Your Inhaler CONT.

issues. Even though there is a substantial price difference between the two, Ventolin being the more expensive, many patients still opt to pass on Pro-Air to get the sudden relief they require. However, some asthmatics prefer Pro-Air over Proventil because of its managing capabilities, so they don't become dependent on the rescue inhaler in the long run. Pro-Air is more like the asthma tracker of medicine—it acts to keep asthma under control.

Side effects or not, inhalers are something we use because it's worth it to help us breathe a little easier. With technology making new and improved medications and programs to aid in controlling asthma, such as the eAsthma Tracker, asthma can become easy to manage and even preventable.

Well, I'm out of breath after this speech, but don't be afraid to visit, like, and read our Facebook page. We would love to hear your ideas and opinions. Come in, stay a while, and give us your take on which inhaler you prefer to use and any side effects you experience. Does Pro Air, Ventolin or Proventil work for you? What do you use and why?

You'll also find interesting facts from doctors, videos, articles, and a few asthma poems, and you'll meet others who know what you're going through. So look us up on Facebook and share some of your thoughts and advice on how we can help ourselves and our children breathe a little easier.

By Stacey Riding

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Second Hand Smoke

Since having a son with severe asthma, I have become keenly aware of secondhand smoke. Before, I may not have noticed as I walked past someone smoking a cigarette or puffing on an e-hookah as I strolled through a parking lot to my car. Now I find myself ushering my little guy along and making an effort to avoid places where we might encounter smoke.

By now, most of us know there are plenty of reasons not to light up, but those with asthma have even more reason to avoid smoking. Not only does it worsen or trigger asthma symptoms, smoking can make it much harder to control asthma.

Perhaps most vulnerable to smoke are those who get it secondhand—from their parents, relatives, or even strangers. According to the American Lung Association, exposure to secondhand smoke causes more than 202,000 asthma flare-ups in children each year. Children without asthma suffer, too—secondhand smoke is responsible for hundreds of thousands of lower respiratory and ear infections each year. In fact, otherwise healthy kids who are exposed to smoke from ten cigarettes per day are at risk of developing asthma.

The dangers of secondhand smoke are well documented. Children with asthma who live in a household with a smoker may:

- Have more frequent asthma flare-ups
- Be more likely to end up in the emergency room for their asthma
- Miss school more often due to asthma
- Need more asthma medicine to control their symptoms

Not be able to control their asthma, even with medicine
Be more prone to bronchitis or pneumonia

IS NO JOKE

If you are a regular smoker, smoke socially, or even use e-cigarettes or hookah, and your child has asthma, one of the most important steps you can take to help him or her is to quit

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smoking. Any type of smoke can trigger an asthma attack. Encourage relatives or anyone your child spends time with to quit the habit or stay smoke-free around your child. Kids who touch, play on, or breathe near surfaces

contaminated with cigarette smoke can develop breathing problems from “thirdhand” smoke, says KidsHealth.org.

So if you are ready to quit, or if you need help educating family members about the dangers of secondhand smoke, don’t wait. Most insurance plans offer free smoking cessation programs, and lots of support is free. Use these resources to learn more.

Resources:

Call the Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit tobaccofreeutah.org.
Call the American Lung Association at 1-800-LUNGUSA or visit lung.org.
Call your insurance company and ask about the smoking cessation program.

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Tired of the Weather?

Thinking of relocating to another state?

Maybe you are taking a vacation to visit relatives or in-laws, or perhaps you just have the urge to see the world and smell the flowers on the way. Whatever reason you hit the road, a rule to consider is to stay healthy. Before you pack your bags and load up your trailer, let's review some of the states and cities that'll make you pay for leaving behind your inhaler.

First off, coined as the city of "Hotlanta", just the name alone can get one dehydrated. Atlanta has always had an annual high pollen count. Known for its hot, humid weather and bad air quality, Atlanta has an above average rate for deaths related to asthma. Next off, ringing in tourists for its liberty bell, the city of brotherly love is not a good place to be for asthmatics. Residents find themselves in the hospital more than sightseeing; 16,000 children a year end up in the emergency room from asthma. It has worse than average air quality, smoking seems like a requirement and poverty leaves people uninsured so they can't afford to go to the doctor.

Let us travel to Knoxville, Tennessee. This city is at an all-time high pollen count in the spring. Spring in Utah doesn't sound so bad now! But because grass and trees pollinate at an alarming rate, just breathing is a challenge. Tennessee is also known for its ragweed which also starts popping up in the spring and that's actually considered one of the ten most threatening flowers to asthmatics.

One doesn't need to ask it, Chicago isn't the city to breathe easy in. This city is another one that

brings in the most visits to the E.R and also ranks high on death related asthma toll. Chicago is also known for poor air quality, but it's also one of the top cities that has high levels of smog and soot in the air.

Let's leave all these smoky cities behind for a moment and smell the roses. What other plants and flowers carry an aroma that can be a welcome to the nose? Let's head to Missouri where they are known for their ragweed, sunflowers, and the ever so popular chrysanthemums. Aside from the bad air quality in Kansas City, this state is home to three of the worst flowers for people with asthma. Constant pollinating gives anyone with asthma or allergies a hard time. These are considered the wolf in sheep's clothing flowers.

Thinking of moving to Oklahoma? Make a U-turn! Oklahoma City is ranked 15th out of the 220 cities with bad ozone quality. Humidity and all that extra heat relaying down on people can bring out the worse. Studies show that people who overheat are more prone to having breathing issues.

Tumbleweed anyone? Texas is another state deemed as one of the worst place to live for asthmatics. Dried up bushes that carries with the wind, asthmatics are actually allergic to these as they are found all over the place. The Lone Star state is home to many factories, oil refineries and mills, producing an abundance of smoke harmful to the ozone and lungs, it's known for having excessive heat seasons. Winds carry dust around like a passenger on a bus, every time someone inhales, something enters the lung. Let's head somewhere closer to home, allergic to palm trees? If you're an asthmatic, it's listed as one of the top ten worse trees for people with asthma. You can find most of these in the heated hiatus of Hawaii which is a very popular vacation spot.

Tired of the Weather CONT.

You notice all these cities and states have one bright thing in common, the sun and it's radiating heat.

Oak trees are another tree listed on the top ten that doesn't favor people with asthma and they reside in Florida in the spring along with pecan trees. I'd vacation in Florida, but I wouldn't make myself at home.

Let's end my list with the state and city that has to be number one, Los Angeles, California.

Smog central is what it's called and this bad air isn't what the factories are pumping out. Smog is a natural resident in L.A along with tons of heat. Smoking laws are horrid down there as there are people on every corner doing it. L.A also has low scores when it comes to the availability and access to asthma specialists so that gives asthmatics limited options when seeking advice or help. I know, California is home to the major attraction called Disneyland! But if you're letting "Mickey Mouse" be your

only motivation for moving down there, then that's "goofy" on your part. Don't take your asthma on a rollercoaster, it's only fun for the moment.

Those are some of the worst cities and states on my list for asthmatics to live or even visit at certain times. I'm sure there are plenty more. Before you travel, you may want to research and be prepared. Don't let your vacation become a hospitalization.

By Stacey Riding