

NEQCA Rxreview

Transition from Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) Propelled to Hydrofluoroalkane (HFA) Propelled Albuterol Inhalers

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The FDA is alerting patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals to important information about albuterol inhalers. As part of a multi-year phase out, chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) propelled albuterol inhalers will not be available after December 31, 2008.

Healthcare professionals are being advised to transition patients to hydrofluoroalkane (HFA) propelled albuterol inhalers now if they have not already. Note that doing so will require a new prescription. CFC albuterol inhalers cannot be interchanged with HFA albuterol inhalers at the pharmacy even though dosing usually remains unchanged. Also, HFA albuterol inhalers are brand-name only medications, so patients should expect to pay more for them than the CFC albuterol inhalers which were available in generic versions.

Three HFA albuterol inhalers and one levalbuterol inhaler have been approved by the FDA (see table). HFA inhalers may taste and feel different than CFC inhalers. Each HFA albuterol inhaler has different priming instructions, and patients should read and understand the instructions first before using the inhaler.

Product & Insurance	Priming Instructions	Mouthpiece Weekly Cleaning Instructions
ProAir HFA (albuterol) B ² H ² T ²	Shake the inhaler well. Prime the inhaler before using for the 1 st time by releasing 3 “test sprays” into the air, away from the face. Repeat the above priming procedure before using ONLY if inhaler has not been used for > 2 weeks.	Remove medication canister! Never get the canister wet. Clean the plastic mouthpiece by running warm water through the top to the bottom for 30 seconds at least once a week. Shake to remove excess water, then air-dry thoroughly (such as overnight).
Proventil HFA (albuterol) B ² H ² T ³	Shake the inhaler well. Prime the inhaler before using for the 1 st time by releasing 4 “test sprays” into the air, away from the face. Repeat the above priming procedure before using ONLY if inhaler has not been used for > 2 weeks.	
Ventolin HFA (albuterol) B ^{NC} H ² T ²	Shake the inhaler well. Prime the inhaler before using for the 1 st time by releasing 3 “test sprays” into the air, away from the face. After the 1 st priming the counter should read 200. Repeat the above priming procedure before using ONLY if inhaler has not been used for > 2 weeks OR if the inhaler is dropped.	
Xopenex HFA (levalbuterol) B ² H ³ T ³	Shake the inhaler well. Prime the inhaler before using for the 1 st time by releasing 4 “test sprays” into the air, away from the face. Repeat the above priming procedure before using ONLY if inhaler has not been used for more than 3 days.	
B ² = BCBSMA tier 2 B ³ = BCBSMA tier 3 B ^{NC} = BCBSMA Not Covered H ² = HPHC tier 2 H ³ = HPHC tier 3 T ² = THP tier 2 T ³ = THP tier 3		