

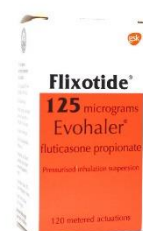
OWNERS' GUIDE: HOW TO USE AN INHALER WITH YOUR CAT



We have recommended that your cat receives an inhaled medication. This is a guide to help you go from **'You must be kidding!'** to **'Ok, I will give it a try!'**

The most common conditions for which we prescribe inhaled medications are **Feline Bronchial Diseases** such as asthma and chronic bronchitis.

The most common medication given by inhaler is a **steroid**, eg fluticasone (Flixotide). By giving it as an inhaler rather than a tablet or injection means the active drug is delivered right to where it's needed and minimises the amount that goes into the rest of the body. This is great news for steroids, as they can cause side effects in cats such as increasing their appetite and drinking, weight gain, reduced immune function and even development of diabetes.

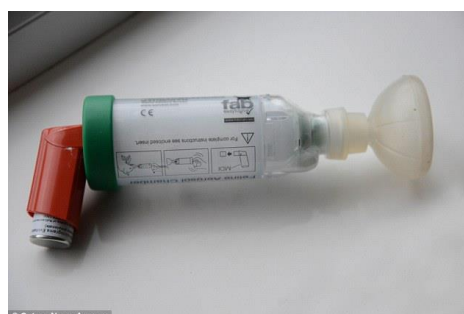


Another type of medication given by inhaler is called a **bronchodilator**, usually salbutamol (Ventolin). This type of drug helps to open the airways when there is reversible narrowing (bronchoconstriction) occurring. Most asthmatic people will carry one of this with them all the time, in case they have an asthma attack. Breathing it in means it acts immediately, as opposed to minutes to hours delay if given by injection or tablet.

The concept of getting your cat to tolerate an inhaler may seem impossible or even ludicrous, but with the right guidance, lots of **patience** and plenty of **cat treats**, it can be done - and can even be easier than giving tablets – eventually!

First thing to explain; we don't expect your cat to put its mouth around the inhaler like a human would! It's the same as for babies that need inhalers – we have to use three things – **the inhaler, a spacer chamber and a mask**, like this:

We recommend you use a cat-specific spacer such as the **Aerokat** spacer. Spacers designed for children may not fit the types of mask required for cats, and usually do not have a **special valve** – this is really useful for cats as you can activate the inhaler away from the cat without losing the medication – the noise of the inhaler sometimes scares the cat otherwise.



The key to acclimatising your cat to using an inhaler is **gradual familiarisation**, do not force or rush your cat into using it, and **rewarding them** with treats, play or grooming.

Here's some steps to think about:

1. Leave the device out so your cat gets used to the **sight and smell of it**.

2. Using just the **mask**, **rub it over your cat**, particularly its head so it picks up your cat's individual smell, remember to reward your cat for allowing you to do this! Even if your cat just sniffs at the mask, given them a reward.

3. Start touching the mask to your cat's face, initially for a second, and gradually build up to **putting it over his/her muzzle**, reward them even if they only tolerate it for a moment. Gradually build up the time the mask is over the muzzle to about **15 seconds**.

4. Once they seem happy with this, **repeat the process with the spacer and inhaler** attached to the mask. **Keep those treats coming!**

5. If using a spacer with a valve like the Aerokat, you can **depress the inhaler into the spacer away from the cat** – it makes a hissing noise which can be off-putting if it's too close to your cat's head. Then you can apply the device over your cat's muzzle, and allow them to breathe in the medication. The Aerokat spacer also has a '**Flow-Vu**' device which helps you count the number of breaths the cat takes. **Count 7 to 10 breaths** then remove the device. If instructed by your vet, you may have to repeat the process with a second 'actuation' (press of the inhaler).

6. It is best to **wipe the cat's face** with a slightly damp cloth to remove traces of the medication – sometimes it can create a rash on the face otherwise.

7. **Reward! Reward! Reward!**



If your cat is not all that interested in food, you may need to use a short period of play, or even a short grooming session as a reward instead.

It is likely your cat will **need to start or continue with tablets** (eg steroids like prednisolone) while they are getting used to the inhaler. **Be patient**, and don't despair, some cats take months to get used to an inhaler! If you are having trouble and would like some further advice, just call us.

If you have internet access, it is really worth looking at this webpage:

<https://icatcare.org/advice/cat-health/using-inhaler-treat-feline-asthma-0> which helps explain about using the inhaler.

And this is a great Youtube video showing how Luna the cat did NOT want to use her inhaler, but with **patience and perseverance**, they got there in the end!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dH4k_dOdNbY