

Allergy and Dermatology Specialists



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Potential Albuterol Metered Dose Inhaler Shortage

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It has come to our attention that certain areas of the country are already experiencing shortages of albuterol inhalers. **We do not suspect Texas is experiencing any shortage at this time**, since other regions nationally have many more COVID-19 patients. However, this shortage may spread throughout the U.S. since hospitalized patients with COVID-19 who need albuterol are treated with albuterol inhalers instead of nebulizers.

There is a concern that nebulizers could increase the risk of viral transmission by aerosolizing viruses from patients. The virus could become airborne during exhalation from the nebulizer or particularly when the patient coughs, we advise finding a **dedicated, small area of your home to be used for breathing treatments** (e.g. bathroom with door closed) and perhaps face a wall that can be sanitized following your nebulizer treatment.

What should you do if you cannot refill an albuterol inhaler?

If absolutely necessary, we believe recently expired albuterol inhalers would be safe for use and at least partially effective. Using 3-4 puffs rather than 2 puffs is reasonable to help reverse more severe symptoms. If you have access to a nebulizer, albuterol solution is readily available (at this time). Another option represents an FDA “off-label” suggestion; we have treated many patients with certain combination “controller” medications that contain formoterol (Symbicort or Dulera). These medications should be suitable for “relief” of most acute, mild asthma symptoms when used twice daily.

It is important for patients not to overuse their albuterol inhaler as one canister is expected to last 3 months. We will authorize refills for our patients, but we will limit the number of refills to those who absolutely need more albuterol within the next few months. We will not authorize routine pharmacy requests for automated refills of albuterol HFA. We will want to speak directly with each patient first. Similarly, patients should be declining automated refills of albuterol if they currently have a supply that should last for 3 months.

Reference: <https://mailchi.mp/acaai/important-message-about-albuterol-shortage?e=fdec84fc5a>

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