

This resource is designed to help you navigate the process of accessing and using nebulizers— from prescription to delivery. It was developed by the COPD Foundation Nebulizer Consortium, a group of health care professionals, industry partners, and patient advocates.

NEBULIZER AND MEDICATION PRESCRIPTIONS

Electronic Orders

You can place an order through a local pharmacy, a direct medical equipment (DME) company, or a specialty pharmacy.

Patient Purchasing

A patient may prefer to purchase their nebulizer from a drug store or online.

In these instances, caution is necessary to avoid a change in delivered dose. For example, ultrasonic nebulizers are notoriously inefficient for delivering suspensions.

Medication

Medication for use in nebulizers is prescribed separately from the nebulizer. Short acting bronchodilators are the most frequently prescribed medications, other medications commonly prescribed include inhaled steroids and long acting bronchodilators.

NEBULIZER TYPES

Types of nebulizers include generic jet, efficient jet (breath-enhanced, breath-actuated) and mesh nebulizers. Nebulizer efficiency can vary significantly across nebulizer types. DME companies will supply the nebulizer that they prefer (mostly generic), unless the patient requests a specific nebulizer. Generic type nebulizers can be less efficient and may take longer to nebulize medication. This can potentially impact patient adherence to the prescribed treatment. This becomes more important with inhaled antibiotics or medications where efficacy depends on efficient delivery to the lungs.

**Breath-actuated
Jet Nebulizer**



**Breath-enhanced
Jet Nebulizer**



**Standard
Jet Nebulizer**



**Continuous Vibrating
Mesh Nebulizer**



NEBULIZER ACCESS ISSUES

Many home health care and DME distributors prioritize price when procuring nebulizers due to fixed reimbursement rates based on equipment type. To maintain profitability, DME suppliers often select cost-effective options with little regard for a patient's therapeutic needs, frequently resulting in the use of inefficient generic jet nebulizers that may deliver suboptimal drug doses.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO ENSURE THAT:

- Patients are using efficient devices for optimal drug delivery and therapeutic outcomes.
- Nebulizers and compressors are aligned for the medication. Some medications, such as Tobramycin (TOBI), are only approved with specific combinations of nebulizers and compressors.
- The patient understands and the prescription clarifies whether the nebulizer is single use or reusable.
- New formulations of nebulization solutions that define preferred nebulizer type are paired with their specific nebulizer for optimal performance.
- If a specific nebulizer is needed or preferred to deliver the prescribed medication, be sure to specify and write "dispense as written" to decrease the chance of the supplier substituting with a different type.

Frequently Asked Questions



How can I be sure it goes to the right part of Medicare?

- Medicare Part B billing requires a diagnosis code in the prescription.
- Some local pharmacies may choose not to complete the reimbursement paperwork to provide a nebulizer and tell patients that it is “not covered.” Recommend the pharmacy to bill under Medicare Part B if they are a Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) DME supplier.
- Confirm prescribed nebulizer is covered under patient’s insurance plan to avoid unnecessary out of pocket expense. Certain nebulizer types are not reimbursed by insurance.

What is a specialty pharmacy?

Specialty pharmacies provide “special” medications for specific conditions or diagnoses, e.g. I -neb for I loprost, Tyvaso (treprostinil) for Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension, Altera for inhaled aztreonam and Lamira for inhaled amikacin. Some will also assist patients with complex insurance issues, such as benefits investigations and prior authorization paperwork, to ensure access to necessary treatments. If a specific nebulizer is needed or preferred to deliver the prescribed medication, please specify and write dispense as written to decrease the chance of DME/ Pharmacy auto-substituting with a different nebulizer type.

How can a patient access a specialty pharmacy?

Specialty pharmacies may be listed on insurance forms. You can also look up specialty pharmacies online. Some pharmaceutical companies have arranged that their medication(s) are only provided through a network of accredited specialty pharmacies – like Verona Pharma with their PDE3/4 inhibitor. Common specialty pharmacies are Accredo, Direct Rx, and CVS Specialty.

What should you do in the absence of specialty pharmacies?

Some DME companies also provide nebulized medications. For nebulizer use at home, DME providers are the most common source for patients, but can also use retail and mail order pharmacies to access nebulizers.

What are frequent reasons for denials?

- Examples include an incorrect Medicare submission (e.g., no diagnosis code, missing information), equipment or medication shortage or not covered by insurance, medication not billed under Medicare Part B (e.g., billed under Medicare Part D), prior authorization required, pharmacy not Medicare Part B certified, or not providing clinical rationale based on the payer policy or if medication is not formulary, Medicaid denials due to step therapy not met or clinical rationale not provided.
- Budesonide has been denied for patients with COPD as it is only FDA approved for children with asthma.

How to deal with preauthorizations to speed time between prescription and medication delivery?

If you use CoverMyMeds website for preauthorization, you need to provide a justification and send in the patient history and all necessary documentation, and ensure clinician is going to the correct patient benefit for medicare advantage prescription drug plan. A pre-authorization can be submitted by fax. Include filling instructions and cleaning requirements, guidance on how often to change a nebulizer, instructions to monitor for malfunction, and when it should be discarded.

NEBULIZER MAINTENANCE / MORE RESOURCES

Device manufacturer customer care departments are a resource if there is difficulty accessing a specific nebulizer type, particularly if it’s required to deliver a specific medication. They can also help with device troubleshooting and warranty replacements or questions. Nebulizers should be replaced according to the manufacturer’s instructions. This is generally every 6 months for reusable nebulizers and every 7-10 days for disposables. Prescribers should note that patients will also need replacements or refills on the nebulizer handset to maintain optimal drug delivery performance.

