How to use an inhaler (open-mouth technique)

An inhaler delivers medicine directly to your lungs. There are many kinds of inhalers. The pictures below show you how to use a metered-dose inhaler.* There are two techniques for using a metered-dose inhaler: open mouth and closed mouth. The pictures below show the open-mouth technique. Ask your healthcare provider which technique is right for you. It may help to practice the open-mouth inhaler technique in front of a mirror.

1. Open the inhaler (take the cap off).
2. Hold the inhaler with the mouthpiece down and towards you.
3. If the inhaler instructions say so, shake the inhaler.
4. Breathe out all the way through your mouth.
5. Hold the inhaler two finger widths away from your lips.
6. As you start to breathe in deeply and slowly through your mouth, push the top of the inhaler down.
7. Once the spray comes out, take your finger off the inhaler. Keep breathing in until your lungs are completely full.
8. Take the inhaler away from your mouth and hold your breath.
9. Continue to hold your breath for 10 seconds or for as long as is comfortable. This helps the medicine get into your lungs.
10. Breathe out slowly.
11. Wait up to 1 minute, and then repeat steps 3 through 10.
12. Rinse your mouth with water, and spit it out. Do not swallow.

* You may need to prime your inhaler before use. To learn about this and how to use and care for your inhaler, always follow the instructions that come with your inhaler.

Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions. Show your provider how you use your inhaler to be sure you are using it the right way.