

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) EPA Ban on CFCs August 2008

The Food and Drug Administration in May 2008 issued a public health advisory to alert patients, caregivers and healthcare professionals to switch to hydrofluoroalkane-propelled albuterol inhalers given the upcoming Environmental Protection Agency ban on chlorofluorocarbon-propelled inhalers, which no longer will be available in the United States after Dec. 31, 2008. All inhalers instead will be powered by ozone-friendly HFAs, or hydrofluoroalkanes.

### **Why do Metered Dose Inhalers (MDIs) contain propellants?**

MDIs use a chemical propellant to push medication out of the inhaler. Two common propellants are CFCs and HFAs (hydrofluoroalkanes). HFAs are ozone-safe propellants and are replacements for ozone-depleting CFCs in many industries.

### **Why are MDIs propelled by CFCs being phased out?**

Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) deplete the stratospheric ozone layer, which allows more harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation to reach the Earth's surface. Overexposure to UV radiation can lead to serious health effects, such as skin cancer, cataracts, and immune suppression, as well serious ecological impacts.

As a part of the Environmental Protection Agency's involvement in the Montreal Protocol (an international agreement to protect the ozone layer), the United States has committed to phasing out and eventually eliminating substances that deplete the ozone layer, including CFCs. It is estimated that actions to protect and restore the ozone layer will save an estimated 6.3 million U.S. lives that would have otherwise been lost to skin cancer.

### **Will I still be able to purchase an albuterol MDI after December 31, 2008?**

Yes. Only CFC-albuterol MDIs are being phased out. CFC-free albuterol MDIs (i.e. HFA MDIs) are available. There are currently four HFA MDIs available to patients - three that contain albuterol and one that contains levalbuterol.

- Proventil HFA (albuterol sulfate) Inhalation Aerosol
- Ventolin HFA (albuterol sulfate) Inhalation Aerosol
- ProAir HFA (albuterol sulfate) Inhalation Aerosol
- Xopenex HFA (levalbuterol tartrate) Inhalation Aerosol

### **What are the differences between the old inhalers and the new ones?**

The new and old inhalers differ in feel, force and taste, and how they are primed and cleaned. It is important to educate patients on the specific actions of their inhalers so they will get optimal effective therapy. Further, there are differences in pricing among the new inhalers, but they are significantly more expensive than the old CFC inhalers. Some insurance companies might cover one inhaler and not another, so the patient must check with their third party carrier to see what inhaler is paid for. If coverage is an issue, the manufacturing companies of the inhalers offer patient assistance programs and free samples to the physicians. Some financial assistance is also available through the Partnership for Prescription Assistance (1-888-477-2669).

### **Will I be able to purchase CFC-albuterol MDIs after December 31, 2008?**

No. Under the Nonessential Products Ban, CFC-albuterol inhalers cannot be sold at pharmacies, from online distributors, or from any other sources after December 31, 2008.