

Rx

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UPDATE



FDA Issues Advisory to Switch to HFA-Propelled Albuterol Inhalers

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a public health advisory alerting patients, caregivers and health care professionals that chlorofluorocarbon (CFC)-propelled albuterol inhalers will not be available in the U.S. after December 31, 2008 and the switch to hydrofluoroalkane (HFA)-propelled albuterol inhalers should begin now.

Albuterol inhalers are used to treat bronchospasm (wheezing) in patients with asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

The phase-out of CFC-propelled inhalers is due to their contribution to the depletion of the ozone layers above the Earth's surface, which is harmful to the environment. As a result of the Clean Air Act and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, an international environmental treaty, the U.S. has agreed to phase out production and importation of ozone-depleting substances including CFCs.

The FDA is urging patients to talk with their health care professionals now about switching to HFA-propelled albuterol inhalers as manufacturers have been increasing production and an adequate supply is currently available. Also, patients may need to try different inhalers to find the right product for them.

There are three FDA-approved albuterol inhalers: ProAir® HFA Inhalation Aerosol, Proventil® HFA Inhalation Aerosol and Ventolin® HFA Inhalation Aerosol. A medication similar to albuterol, levalbuterol, is also available as Xopenex® HFA Inhalation Aerosol.

The FDA wants patients to be aware of several facts:

- Albuterol HFA inhalers are safe and effective and contain the same active medication as the albuterol CFC inhalers.
- Albuterol HFA inhalers may taste different and the force of the spray may feel softer than an albuterol CFC inhaler.
- Patients should review the directions that come with the albuterol HFA inhaler to understand how to use and care for it. Cleaning and priming your inhaler is very important to make sure the medicine flows from the inhaler into your lungs.

Catalyst Rx will continue to monitor this situation and will provide updates to its clients as they become available. No changes in coverage for albuterol will occur at this time. If you have questions, please call the Catalyst Rx Clinical Department at 702-869-4600.

Source:

<http://www.fda.gov/cder/mdi/albuterol.htm>