

Health Bulletin



Changes On Horizon For Asthma Medication

(NAPSA)—Many Americans who take asthma medication may be affected by a change designed to make their inhalers more environmentally friendly.

The National Consumers League (NCL), the nation's oldest consumer advocacy organization, says asthma patients should know about the change, which will affect how their medication is delivered to the lungs.

Beginning in January 2009, fast-acting asthma inhalers containing chlorofluorocarbons, (CFCs) will no longer be available to consumers. CFCs make the contents of the inhaler spray out.

CFCs aren't harmful to people—but they are harmful to the ozone layer. The U.S. is part of the Montreal Protocol, a 1987 international treaty signed by more than 150 countries to reduce CFC pollution. As part of that commitment, the U.S. is phasing out CFCs used in asthma inhalers. The use of CFCs has been banned in aerosol spray cans in the U.S. since the 1970s.

A new way of delivering asthma medications, called hydrofluoroalkane (HFA), will replace CFCs. It is an ozone-friendly propellant and has been used in inhalers for more than a decade.

In a recent survey commissioned by NCL and conducted by Harris Interactive, 85 percent of adult asthma patients who rely on fast-acting or rescue inhalers, often called albuterol metered dose inhalers (MDI), said they had not heard, read or seen any information about changes for their fast-acting inhalers.



The new asthma inhalers that do not use chlorofluorocarbons are just as effective and more Earth friendly.

HFA inhalers contain the same albuterol medication that asthma patients have used in the CFC inhalers. Only the way the inhaler gets the medicine to the lungs is different. NCL says that even though the main ingredient in the medicine won't change, the way the new inhaler works may produce noticeable differences in taste, delivery feel or speed of relief. The new inhaler should take care of asthma symptoms just as well.

Companies that make MDIs are now switching to the HFA inhaler, and fewer and fewer of the CFC albuterol inhalers will be available as the 2009 deadline approaches. So it's a good time for asthma patients to talk to their doctors about making the transition.

A new prescription will be needed for the HFA inhalers, which are more expensive than generic CFC albuterol inhalers.

For more information about the NCL survey and HFA inhalers, visit www.nclnet.org/asthma.