OSCE checklist for inhaler technique

An OSCE checklist for inhaler technique covers the device check, the preparation, the breath and the aftercare, and finishes by asking the patient to show you. This is our own practice list.

The checklist, step by step

1. Wash your hands, introduce yourself, confirm identity and explain the task.
2. Check the inhaler and the spacer: the name, the date, the dose counter if there is one, and that nothing blocks the mouthpiece.
3. Check the patient's usual technique and how often they use it.
4. Prepare the device as the patient information leaflet says, which may include shaking it.
5. Fit the inhaler into the spacer, sit upright and breathe out gently.
6. Place the mouthpiece between the teeth and seal the lips.
7. Press the canister once and breathe in slowly and steadily, or use the breathing method for that spacer.
8. Hold the breath for a comfortable moment, then breathe out. Wait before a second dose.
9. Replace the cap, and clean the spacer as the leaflet says.
10. Rinse the mouth after a steroid inhaler, and say why.
11. Ask the patient to show you the technique back, and correct kindly.
12. Check when to use it, what to do if it does not help, and when to seek help.

What candidates commonly forget

- Asking the patient to demonstrate back.
- Using a spacer correctly.
- Mouth rinsing after a steroid inhaler.
- Checking the dose counter.

- Asking about the safety net.

How to use this list

This is our own practice checklist. Exam bodies mark in their own way. Use it to build a routine, then say each step aloud as you do it. You can also practise with an AI patient on this site, and try one station free with no sign-up. For nursing stations, see the NMC OSCE stations list.

Common questions

Is the technique the same for every inhaler?

No. A metered dose inhaler and a dry powder inhaler need different breathing. Read the leaflet for the device.

Why does a spacer help?

Asthma + Lung UK says a spacer helps the right amount of medicine get to the lungs, and it has videos for each method.

Is this a marking sheet?

No. It is our own list for practice.

Sources

- Asthma + Lung UK: How to use your inhaler
- NHS: Salbutamol inhaler
- BTS, NICE and SIGN: Asthma (NG245)
- NICE: Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (NG115)
- Asthma + Lung UK: Spacers

Checked 2026-11-13. Fees and rules change, so confirm them with the regulator before you book.