

PRESS RELEASE

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Getting medication where premature infants need it: NBank Capital invests €500,000 in InhalPlus

Hannover-based Fraunhofer spin-off secures its first investor

In premature infants receiving breathing support, often only a small fraction of an inhaled medication reaches the lungs. Hannover-based start-up InhalPlus has developed a system designed to change exactly that, and has now secured its first external investor: NBank Capital, the investment company of NBank, the state-owned development bank of Lower Saxony, is investing €500,000 in InhalPlus GmbH. The agreement was notarized in Hannover on October 16, 2026. InhalPlus was spun off from the Fraunhofer Institute for Toxicology and Experimental Medicine ITEM in August 2026.

Medication rarely reaches the lungs

Many premature infants receive breathing support in intensive care: small nasal prongs deliver gentle positive pressure that keeps their airways open (CPAP). In Germany, Austria and Switzerland, this applies to around 37,000 infants each year, and many of them develop lung problems. An inhaled medication has to travel through the breathing circuit: the aerosol is diluted in the breathing gas, deposits in the tubing or is lost through leaks.

The InhalPlus Bypass System addresses this problem. It diverts a small partial flow from the breathing circuit, enriches it with the medication outside the main gas flow and delivers it directly at the infant's nose. Respiratory support continues without interruption. In laboratory tests using a preterm infant breathing simulator, the system achieved an inhaled dose up to eight times higher than the standard clinical system.

From prototype to product

InhalPlus will use the capital to develop its clinical prototype into a series-ready product, prepare the regulatory documentation for later certification as a medical device and expand its team. The capital also serves as the company's own contribution to public funding programs. The first clinical study, a proof-of-concept study, is planned to start early 2027: the system is then to be used in premature infants at neonatal centers for the first time. The study is funded by IBT Lower Saxony, the Institute for Biomedical Translation by Niedersachsen.next, through the "zukunft.niedersachsen" program of the State of Lower Saxony and the Volkswagen Foundation. InhalPlus plans to bring the system to market from 2029, initially at selected hospitals in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

"This is where a clear medical need meets a technology that has been developed in Lower Saxony over many years. These are exactly the kinds of start-ups we want to support early on," says Susanne Hauck, Investment Manager at NBank Capital.

“With every breath, a premature infant inhales only a few milliliters. Until now, most of an inhaled medication has often been lost on its way to the lungs,” says Dr. Felix Carl Wiegandt, co-founder and Managing Director of InhalPlus. “Our system is designed so that the medication reaches even the smallest patients where it is meant to act: in the lungs. With NBank Capital, we have a partner at our side that knows medical technology takes staying power.”

InhalPlus was founded by Dr. Felix Carl Wiegandt (CEO), Dr. Gerhard Pohlmann (CSO) and Dr. Dirk Schäfer (CFO) and uses patents of the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft under an exclusive license. In the long term, the company also sees potential applications in respiratory therapy for adults. The €500,000 investment constitutes InhalPlus's pre-seed round; the next financing round is planned for 2027.

Note to editors: Dr. Felix Carl Wiegandt is available for interviews. The system can be viewed at Fraunhofer ITEM in Hannover.



At the notarization on October 16, 2026 in Hannover (from left): Dr. Dirk Schäfer (CFO, InhalPlus), Ralf Borchers (Managing Director, NBank Capital), Susanne Hauck (Investment Manager, NBank Capital), Dr. Felix Carl Wiegandt (Managing Director, InhalPlus) and Dr. Gerhard Pohlmann (CSO, InhalPlus) with prototypes of the InhalPlus Bypass System.

Photo: Ralf Borchers



The InhalPlus Bypass System on a preterm infant model in an incubator.

Photo: InhalPlus

About InhalPlus

InhalPlus GmbH, based in Hannover, Germany, is developing a patented platform for inhaled drug delivery in patients receiving respiratory support. Its first application is premature infants on non-invasive respiratory support. The company was founded in August 2026 as a spin-off from Fraunhofer ITEM. www.inhalplus.com

About NBank Capital

NBank Capital Beteiligungsgesellschaft mbH is a wholly owned subsidiary of NBank, the investment and development bank of the German state of Lower Saxony. Through various funds, it provides equity capital for start-ups and medium-sized companies in Lower Saxony as part of the state's economic development activities. In 2025, NBank Capital made 13 new investments with a total volume of €8.3 million. www.nbank.de

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