

AIR and MART for Asthma – New NICE/BTS/SIGN Guidance

The recently published [NICE/BTS/SIGN guidance](#) now recommends anti-inflammatory reliever (AIR) and, maintenance and reliever therapy (MART) as the preferred options for asthma treatment in patients 12years and over. These are in preference to the previous recommendations of a regular inhaled corticosteroid (ICS) taken along with a PRN short acting beta agonist (SABA).



Recommendations from the guidance

- All new patients with a diagnosis of mild asthma should be offered a **low-dose ICS/formoterol combination inhaler** to be taken as needed for symptom relief (as-needed AIR therapy)
- All new patients who are experiencing regular symptoms should be started on an appropriate dose of MART and **NOT given a short acting beta agonist (SABA), e.g. salbutamol**
- For patients currently using an ICS/LABA (+/- SABA as needed) regime, consider if the patient is stable, with good adherence, infrequent use of SABA (<3 per year) and no exacerbations in the last year on their current therapy. **If a patient is poorly controlled they should be switched to the preferred AIR or MART regimen**
- Consider identifying asthma patients who are over-ordering SABA inhalers or those who are suitable for a review when re-ordering /re-authorising prescription requests
- Patients who remain on an ICS/LABA (+/- SABA as needed) should use the recommended [cost-effective-choice](#).

NI Formulary Inhaler options for AIR / MART regime

Inhaler	Dose options	Max daily dose	AIR / MART	Cost
DPIs				
Fobumix Easyhaler 80/4.5 Budesonide/ formoterol 	1 dose bd 2 doses od + 1 prn	No more than 6 doses on any single occasion Normally not more than 8 doses / day Max 12 doses / day for limited period	MART	£21.50
Fobumix Easyhaler 160/4.5 Budesonide/ formoterol 	1 dose bd 2 doses od 2 doses bd + 1 prn	No more than 6 doses on any single occasion Normally not more than 8 doses / day Max 12 doses / day for limited period	AIR & MART	£21.50
DuoResp Spiromax 160/4.5 Budesonide/ formoterol 	1 dose bd 2 doses od 2 doses bd + 1 prn	No more than 6 doses on any single occasion Normally not more than 8 doses / day Max 12 doses / day for limited period	MART	£27.97
Symbicort Turbohaler 100/6 Budesonide/ formoterol 	1 dose bd 2 doses od + 1 prn	No more than 6 doses on any single occasion Normally not more than 8 doses / day Max 12 doses / day for limited period	MART	£28.00
Symbicort Turbohaler 200/6 Budesonide/ formoterol 	1 dose bd 2 doses od 2 doses bd + 1 prn	No more than 6 doses on any single occasion Normally not more than 8 doses / day Max 12 doses / day for limited period	AIR & MART	£28.00
Fostair Nexthaler 100/6 Beclometasone and formoterol 	1 dose bd + 1 prn	8 doses	MART	£29.32
pMDIs				
Luforbec Inhaler 100/6 Beclometasone and formoterol 	1 dose bd + 1 dose prn	8 doses	MART	£13.98
Fostair Inhaler 100/6 Beclometasone and formoterol 	1 dose bd + 1 prn	8 doses	MART	£29.32

Reminder: Inhaler Technique

- All patients should have their inhaler technique and adherence checked at every opportunity. Resources to support good inhaler technique are available from [Asthma & Lung UK](#) and [RightBreathe](#)



SABA Overprescribing in Asthma -

Risks from overuse and changes in SABA prescribing guidelines

Overuse of SABAs, and underuse of ICS, are known to be contributing factors to poor asthma control as highlighted again in the recent [MHRA alert](#) issued in April 25. The new [NICE/BTS/SIGN guidance](#) "Asthma: diagnosis, monitoring and chronic asthma management" also highlights SABA overuse and defines **uncontrolled asthma** as:

- Any exacerbation requiring oral corticosteroids or
- frequent regular symptoms, such as:
 - ◊ **using reliever inhaler 3 or more days a week** or
 - ◊ **night-time waking 1 or more times a week**



Identifying overuse of SABA inhalers

If an asthma patient is using their SABA inhaler three times a week or more, it's a sign of untreated inflammation in their airways. Any patient using more than six puffs per week of salbutamol is over-reliant – that is equal to about 300 puffs per year. As there are 200 puffs per inhaler, **only two inhalers per year should be needed if asthma is well controlled**. Research has shown that ≈26% of patients in Northern Ireland are prescribed 6 or more SABA inhalers per year.

The 5 things prescribers can do that will make a difference

- **Be aware of patients who may be overordering or overusing Salbutamol** or other SABA inhalers (e.g. COMPASS report)
- Check with the patient if they are **having to use their SABA more than 3 times per week** or if they are **experiencing symptoms of poor control** (e.g. daytime symptoms more than twice per week, nocturnal symptoms / awakening etc.)
- **Check the patient is using their ICS inhaler**. Make sure the patient is taking their preventative inhaler regularly. No patient should be on a SABA without an ICS
- **Ask the patient to demonstrate their inhaler technique** & support them if there are areas that can be improved
- **Consider AIR or MART regime** if asthma is uncontrolled on ICS/LABA +/- SABA.

Community Pharmacists can also identify SABA overuse & provide support to patients.

See [Pharmacy Regional Newsletter \(PRN\) June 24](#) for more information.



Reduce Your Carbon Footprint ! Correctly Dispose of Your Inhalers



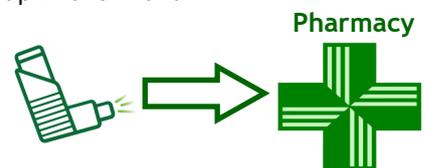
The propellants in pMDI inhalers are powerful greenhouse gases that contribute to **climate change**.

In Northern Ireland, **25,000 tonnes of CO₂** is generated from inhaler prescribing every year, primarily from pMDIs.

Even after an inhaler is finished it still contains these harmful gases that can leach into the atmosphere, so:

Please educate patients that when thrown into household waste, the inhalers end up in landfill and release harmful greenhouse gases into the environment.

**Return used or unwanted inhalers to your local
Community Pharmacy for *Greener Disposal***



Returning pMDI inhalers to community pharmacies for greener disposal can stop a large proportion of harmful greenhouse gases being released into the environment. Currently in the UK less than 1% of inhalers are returned for recycling or greener disposal. For more information see the [Greener Disposal Briefing Document](#).