

# Medicines Optimisation Update

## Patients with Asthma: Inhaled Corticosteroids

### What this includes:

Inhaled corticosteroids NIC/ADQ (net ingredient cost per average daily quantity); Low/Moderate dose ICS/LABA inhalers as a % of all ICS/LABA inhalers: Using the most cost effective inhaled corticosteroids. Ensuring that the lowest effective dose of ICS and long-acting beta-2 agonist (LABA) combination are prescribed in asthma in order to minimise side effects

### Identifying the problem:

A care bundle to support this update is available on the NECS medicines optimisation website:

<http://medicines.necsu.nhs.uk/guidelines/cumbria-guidelines/>

PrescQipp audits: <https://www.prescqipp.info/asthma-focus/category/146-asthma-focus>

### Suggested actions:

- People with asthma should receive a structured review at least annually<sup>1</sup>
- Only increase inhaler dosage or start a new therapy after checking technique and compliance with existing inhalers<sup>1</sup>.
- Identify patients using high doses of ICS and if stable for 3 months consider a step down in treatment<sup>1</sup>.
- Identify those patients not regularly requesting high dose ICS inhalers and remove from repeats - restart at a lower dose when patient requests a further prescription or if there are any concerns undertake a clinical review.
- Audit all patients using ICS and LABA as separate inhalers to ensure LABA not being used inappropriately as a single inhaler<sup>2,3</sup>. Consider swapping to combination inhaler such as Fostair® or Relvar®.
- Ensure Lothian Joint Formulary choices are initiated for new patients and consider changing to Joint Lothian Formulary choice for existing patients using non-Lothian choices<sup>4</sup>.
- Issue patients with a self-management plan<sup>1</sup> and liaise with local community pharmacists to carry out regular inhaler technique checks following changes to patient's inhaler devices.

#### Considerations to support choice of inhaler:

- Cost – Can vary widely between very similar products that may be equally acceptable to the patient.
- Choice - Use Cumbria formulary choices as a guide, bearing in mind cost when choosing first line.
- Patient preference – Take into account patient lifestyle and ability to use the inhaler before adding to repeats.
- Consistency - Try and be consistent with inhaler device choices in order to minimise differences in techniques needed by the patient.

### Non-pharmacological interventions:

- It is important to identify possible triggers to asthmatic symptoms.
- Patients should be encouraged to make a note of any worsening symptoms or use their peak flow meter during exposure to certain situations and discuss with a health care professional.
- Patients should be encouraged to try, where possible, to avoid the known triggers.
- Patients with asthma should be advised about the dangers to themselves and to their children with asthma, of smoking, and be offered appropriate support to stop smoking<sup>1</sup>

### Resources:

- NICE Asthma Guidelines:  
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng80>
- Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) Asthma guidelines:  
<http://www.sign.ac.uk/guidelines/fulltext/141/>
- Asthma self-management plan, Asthma UK:  
<https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/manage-your-asthma/action-plan/>
- Regional Drugs and Therapeutic Centre (RDTc) ICS potency charts and annual costs (requires login):  
<http://rdtc.nhs.uk/prescribing-analysis-reports/reports-cost-impact-and-savings/cost-comparison-charts>

### References:

- NICE Asthma Guidelines: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng80>
- SIGN Asthma guidelines:  
<http://www.sign.ac.uk/guidelines/fulltext/141/>
- 1. NICE technology appraisal guidance ta 138 inhaled corticosteroids for treatment of chronic asthma in adults and children aged 12years and over, 2008  
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ta138>
- 2. National review of asthma deaths.  
<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/why-asthma-still-kills>
- 3. Respiratory system, Lothian joint formulary:  
<http://www.ljf.scot.nhs.uk/LothianJointFormularies/Adult/3.0/Pages/default.aspx>