

Barts Health NHS Trust

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NEL Primary and Secondary Care Adult Asthma Prescribing Guidelines 2025

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Abbreviations	
ACT	Asthma Control Test
AIR	Anti-Inflammatory Reliever
ACQ6	Asthma Control Questionnaire 6
BD	Twice daily
DPI	Dry Powder Inhaler
FeNO	Fractional Exhaled Nitric Oxide
ICS	Inhaled corticosteroid
LAMA	Long-acting muscarinic antagonist
LABA	Long-acting beta 2 agonist
MART	Maintenance and Reliever Therapy
mcg	micrograms
MDI	Metered Dose Inhaler
OCS	Oral Corticosteroids
OD	Once daily
SABA	Short acting beta2 agonist
SE	Side effects

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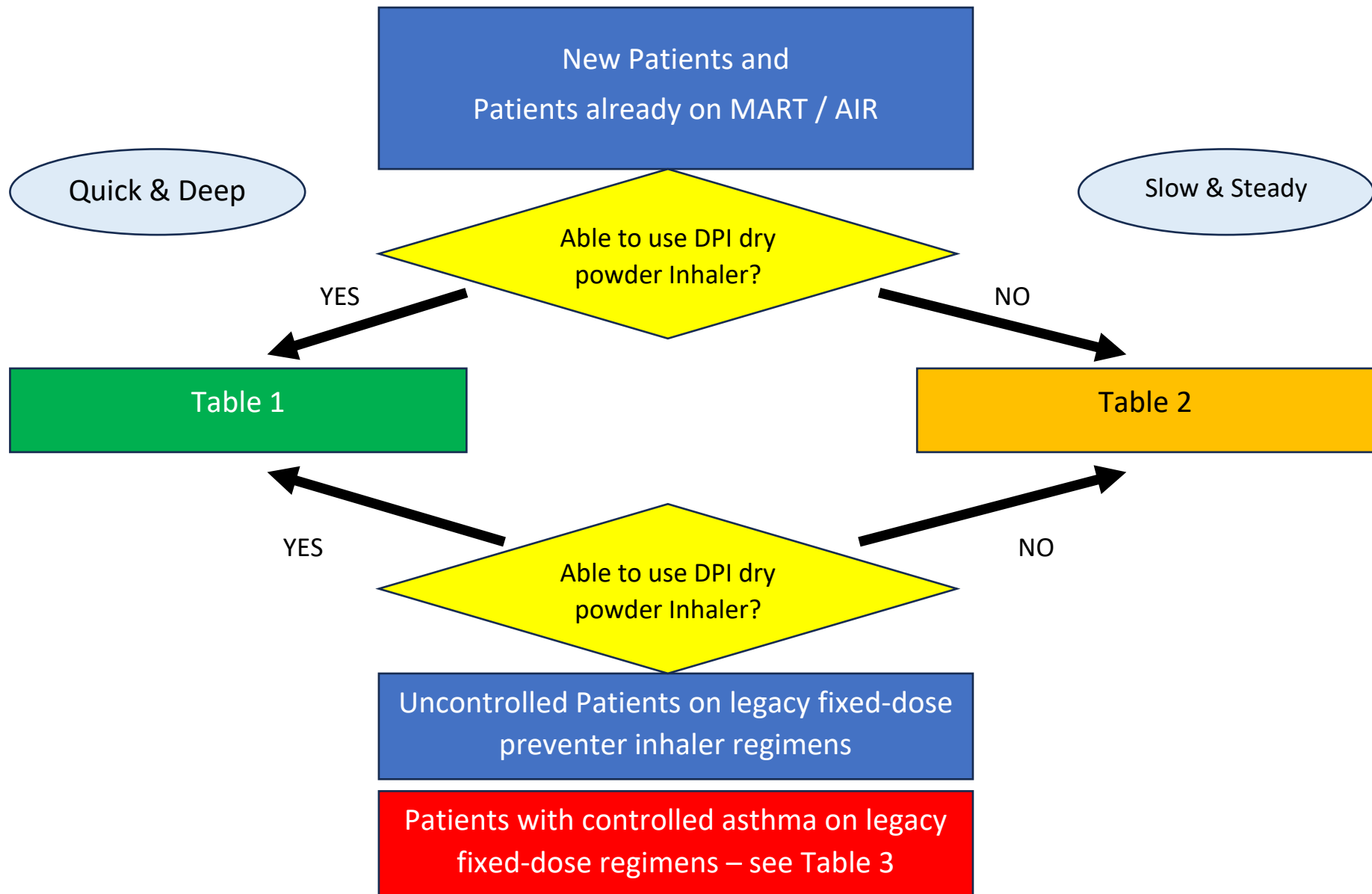
Revision History

Version	Date
1.0	12/2022
2.0	06/2023

Introduction

This updated guideline focuses on ensuring that the most clinically effective, green, and cost-effective asthma treatments are those that a patient will and can take correctly. It highlights the importance of competent inhaler technique assessment and adherence considerations before deciding on the drug molecule. The guide also promotes prescribing by brand and device as well as combination inhalers over separate inhalers prescribing. It supports choosing inhalers devices requiring similar inhalation technique. These will in turn drive our agenda of improved asthma care and greener inhaler outcomes. In addition, we also advise on AIR/MART therapy as per current updated NICE/BTS/SIGN. This will support the drive away from SABA reliance and positively impact clinical care and the NHS low carbon agenda.

Figure 1. Flow chart to support use of guidelines based on patient's inhaler technique ability (See Pg. 6 for Inhaler technique considerations)



First assess Inhaler Technique to decide if patients could use Dry Powder Inhaler devices.

See Table 1 for patients with ability and shared decision to use Dry Powder Inhaler (DPI) devices as first line supporting the green agenda.

Table 1. Adult Asthma Guidelines DPI options

Review patient 8 to 12 weekly and consider moving patients across treatment pathway if symptoms remain uncontrolled despite optimising patient's personalised asthma care. **Refer to secondary care if patients are uncontrolled at Step 4/5 or have ≥ 2 exacerbations despite optimising all modifiable risk factors and treatment.**

Step 1 and New Diagnosis (AIR therapy)

Step 2 Low-Dose MART

Step 3 Moderate-dose MART

Steps 4 and 5 consider referral to secondary care for asthma phenotyping and consideration for biologics.

NICE GUIDELINE NG245 RECOMMENDED ANTI-INFLAMMATORY RELIEVER/ MART REGIMENS

<p>Patients with infrequent symptoms and with no exacerbation risk factors</p> <p>Symbicort® Turbohaler® 200/6</p> <p>Dose: 1 puff as needed (max 8 puffs daily) *</p>	<p>Fostair® NEXThaler® 100/6 (max 8 puffs daily) *</p> <p>Symbicort® Turbohaler® 200/6 (max 12 puffs daily) *</p> <p>Dose: 1 puff BD and as needed</p>	<p>Fostair® NEXThaler® 100/6 (max 8 puffs daily) *</p> <p>Symbicort® Turbohaler® 200/6 (max 12 puffs daily) *</p> <p>Dose: 2 puffs BD and as needed</p>	<p>Consider a trial of the following in addition to STEP 3 MART. Give for a trial period of 8 to 12 weeks unless there are side effects. Stop if not effective.</p> <p>LAMA: Add Incruse 55mcg Ellipta 1 puff OD to MART. Most likely beneficial in context of fixed airflow obstruction</p> <p>LTRA: Add Montelukast Tab 10mg ON (caution neuropsychiatric SEs) to MART. Most likely to be beneficial in the context of allergic rhinitis.</p>	<p><i>Specialist care may prescribe a high-dose ICS containing fixed-dose preventer with MART reliever for selected high-risk patients with concerns of adherence and life-threatening exacerbations (off license).</i></p>
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Do not prescribe a SABA inhaler to adult asthma patients on MART

*** In an emergency can use more than the max 8 or 12 puffs whilst awaiting urgent medical review**

N.B. Inhalers are listed in alphabetical order and not in order of preferences.

For patients unsuitable for DPI devices, see Table 2 for Metered Dose Inhaler (MDI) options to be used via spacers

Table 2. Adult Asthma Guidelines MDI options

Review patient 8 to 12 weekly and consider moving patients across treatment pathway if symptoms remain uncontrolled despite optimising patient's personalised asthma care. **Refer to secondary care if patients have ≥ 2 exacerbations despite optimising all modifiable risk factors and treatment.**

Step 1 New Diagnosis (AIR therapy)	Step 2 Low-dose MART	Step 3 Moderate-dose MART	Steps 4 and 5 consider referral to secondary care for asthma phenotyping and consideration for biologics.
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NICE GUIDELINE NG245 RECOMMENDED ANTI-INFLAMMATORY RELIEVER/ MART REGIMENS

<p>Patients with infrequent symptoms and with no exacerbation risk factors:</p> <p>**Luforbec[®] MDI 100/6</p> <p>Dose: 1 puff as needed via spacer (max 8 puffs daily)*</p>	<p>Luforbec[®] MDI 100/6</p> <p>Dose: 1 puff BD and as needed via spacer (max 8 puffs daily in total)*</p>	<p>Luforbec[®] MDI 100/6</p> <p>Dose: 2 puffs BD and as needed via spacer (max 8 puffs daily in total) *</p>	<p>Consider a trial of the following in addition to STEP 3 MART. Give for a trial period of 8 to 12 weeks unless there are side effects. Stop if not effective.</p> <p>LAMA: Add Tiotropium Respimat[®] 2.5mcg 2 puffs OD to MART. Most likely beneficial in context of fixed airflow obstruction</p> <p>LTRA: Add Montelukast Tab 10mg ON (caution neuropsychiatric SEs) to MART. Most likely to be beneficial in the context of allergic rhinitis.</p>	<p><i>Specialist care may prescribe a high-dose ICS containing fixed-dose preventer with MART reliever for selected high-risk patients with concerns of adherence and life-threatening exacerbations off license.</i></p>
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Do not prescribe a SABA inhaler to adult asthma patients on MART

*** In an emergency can use more than the max 8 or 12 puffs whilst awaiting urgent medical review**

N.B. Inhalers are listed in alphabetical order and not in order of preferences. ** Current unlicensed use but equivalent to Symbicort Turbohaler on DPI section (NEL respiratory network consensus to include the use of a combination ICS-formoterol MDI product in Step 1 for PRN use).

Table 3. LEGACY FIXED-DOSE PREVENTER AND RELIEVER REGIMENS (NOT RECOMMENDED FOR NEW PATIENTS)

Patients on DPI options

Step 1 Low Dose ICS	Step 2 Low Dose ICS/LABA	Step 3 Medium Dose ICS/LABA	Steps 4 and 5 consider referral to secondary care for asthma phenotyping and consideration for biologics.		
Beclometasone Easyhaler® 200mcg 1 puff BD Pulmicort® Turbohaler® 200mcg 1 puff BD	Fostair® NEXThaler® 100/6 mcg 1 puff BD Symbicort® Turbohaler® 200/6 mcg 1 puff BD	Fostair® NEXThaler® 100/6 mcg 2 puffs BD Relvar® Ellipta® 92/22mcg 1 puff OD Symbicort® Turbohaler® 200/6 mcg 2 puffs BD	Eosinophils ≥ 0.3 on treatment 	High Dose ICS/LABA Fostair® NEXThaler® 200/6 mcg (note contains 120 doses) 2 puffs BD Relvar® Ellipta® 184/22 mcg 1 puff OD	High Dose Triple ICS/LABA/LAMA Enerzair® Breezhaler® 114/46/136 mcg 1 puff OD
			Eosinophils < 0.3 and / or with obstructive spirometry 	Medium Dose Triple (Note licensing for COPD i.e. airways obstruction) ICS/LABA/LAMA Trelegy® Ellipta® 92/55/22 mcg 1 puff OD Trimbow® NEXThaler® 88/5/9 mcg 2 puffs BD	
With Salbutamol 100 Easyhaler® (DPI) as needed					

Patients on MDI options

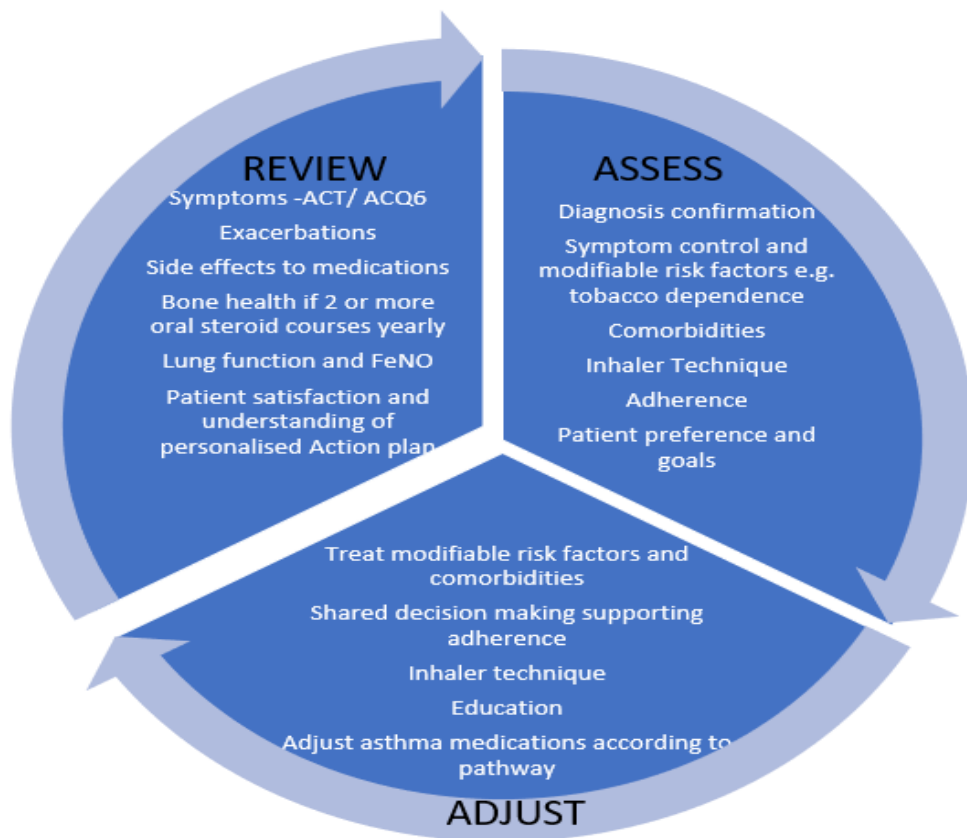
Soprobec® MDI 200 mcg 1 puff BD Via spacer	Luforbec® MDI 100/6 mcg 1 puff BD via spacer Combisal® MDI 50/25mcg 2 puffs BD via spacer	Luforbec® MDI 100/6 mcg 2 puffs BD via spacer Combisal® MDI 125/25mcg 2 puffs BD via spacer	Eosinophils ≥ 0.3 on treatment 	High Dose ICS/LABA Luforbec® MDI 200/6 mcg 2 puffs BD via spacer Combisal® MDI 250/25 mcg 2 puffs BD via spacer	High Dose Triple ICS/LABA/LAMA Trimbow® MDI 172/5/9 mcg 2 puffs BD via spacer
			Eosinophils < 0.3 and / or with obstructive spirometry 	Medium Dose Triple ICS/LABA/LAMA Trimbow® MDI 87/5/9 mcg 2 puffs BD via spacer	
With Salamol® 100 inhaler (MDI) as needed via spacer					

All patients reporting any SABA use must be on inhaled steroids. PRN SABA DPI / MDI to be used alongside fixed dose ICS containing options above depending on inhaler technique. At step 2 and 3, Consider 6-week trial of Montelukast 10mg ON and stop if no benefit; caution neuropsychiatric SEs.

If poorly controlled on Legacy regimen, then switch to MART as below (see Tables 1 & 2)

MART inhaler one puff twice daily and as needed	MART inhaler two puffs twice daily and as needed	MART inhaler two puffs twice daily and as needed	If poorly adherent to preventer inhalers may benefit from switch to MART inhaler two puffs twice daily and as needed, otherwise will need referral to secondary care. Do not switch adherent patients on high-dose ICS to MART in primary care.
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Asthma checklist cycle for personalised asthma care for all patients (Adapted from GINA 2021)



Inhaler Technique Considerations on Initiation of Inhalers	
<p>Does the patient have the right inspiratory effort to inhale the contents from a Dry Powder Inhaler Device?</p> <p>Ask patient to breathe out comfortably and lift chin up Can patient take a QUICK DEEP breath in 2 to 3 seconds? If unsure after observing patient, consider using training devices e.g. training whistles, in-check dial to assess</p>	
<p>YES Consider a DPI [Low carbon option]</p> <p>Consider dexterity ability, adherence and patient preference, benefit of OD vs BD dosing for drug and device decisions.</p>	<p>NO Consider Metered Dose Inhalers (MDI) [High carbon option] via an <u>aerochamber®</u> plus flow vu and /or Soft Mist Inhalers (SMI) [Low carbon option]</p>
<p>TRAIN: If healthcare professional (HCP) is competent, show using placebos and provide links to videos. If HCP is not competent in inhaler technique checks, to provide links to videos and refer to a competent HCP</p>	
<p>Prescribe a consistent device type for all inhalers</p>	
<p>Prescribe combination inhalers where possible</p>	
<p>Prescribe by Brand and Device</p>	
<p>Ongoing Inhaler Technique Reviews should be assessed and optimised with standardised seven step checks based on UK Inhaler Group Standards by a competent HCP.</p>	
<p>Right Breathe- Inhaler prescribing information https://www.rightbreathe.com/ Asthma & Lung UK- How to use your inhaler https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos/</p>	

Adherence Monitoring and Support

FeNO suppression readings where available

Inhaler dose counter checks and electronic sensors data where available

Non-adherence is normal. In practice, patients who manage to pick up and use 75% of their ICS containing inhalers are considered to have good adherence.

As a guide to alert HCP to non-adherence:
 Patients at Step 3 of treatment pathway who pick up 7 or less ICS containing inhalers in the last year= non- adherence

Patients at Step 1 or 2 of treatment pathway who pick up less than 3 ICS containing inhalers in the last year = non-adherence

Example questions to understand patients' non-adherence:
 In a week, how many times will you miss using your inhaler?

You have a list of different medicines to take daily- kindly explain your usual routine with them and which do you find most difficult to fit in your busy day?

Non-judgemental statements and normalising non-adherence is the best way build positive HCP-patient relationships to support non-adherence.

Examples of unintentional non-adherence	Suggested Support
Critical errors with inhaler technique	Correction and optimising technique via a competent HCP
Financial barriers	Suggest pre-payment certificates; increasing quantities of inhalers per prescription
Forgets	Phone reminders, consider inhalers with OD dosing pending suitable inhaler technique
Poor understanding of disease and treatment	Education support

Steroids

Gradual withdrawal of oral steroids should be considered in the following patients:

- Received more than 40mg prednisolone (or equivalent) daily for more than 1 week.
- Been given repeated doses in the evening
- Received more than 3 weeks' treatment
- Recently received repeated courses
- Taken a short course within 1 year of stopping long term therapy

A Blue steroid treatment card and a Red Steroid Emergency Card with Sick day rule counselling should be issued to the following patients

- Receiving high dose ICS (>1000BDP or equivalent)
- On long term oral steroids e. prednisolone 5mg daily or equivalent for 4 weeks or longer and for 12 months after stopping oral steroids
- Taking 40mg prednisolone daily or equivalent for longer than 1 week or repeated short courses of oral corticosteroids.
- Patients taking concurrent steroids via multiple routes (e.g. inhaled and/ or oral steroids with intramuscular or intra-articular glucocorticoid injections)

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/2020/08/steroid-emergency-card-to-support-early-recognition-and-treatment-of-adrenal-crisis-in-adults/>
<https://www.endocrinology.org/adrenal-crisis>

Patient review and asthma treatment changes

1. Check patients' asthma control based on symptoms, limitation of activities and use of rescue medication
2. Numerical asthma control tools for assessing symptom control are Asthma Control Questionnaire(ACQ) and Asthma Control Test (ACT).
3. All patients should have their inhaler technique checked and optimised by a competent HCP and adherence reviewed prior to increasing or commencing new asthma treatments.
4. Any patients not responding to ICS/LABA treatment should have their diagnoses confirmed before increasing treatment.
5. Review if symptoms are due to comorbid conditions e.g. chronic rhinitis, gastroesophageal reflux.
6. If on MART, step up if extra doses are used on most days.
 If on legacy fixed dose regimen and using SABA/ exacerbating, either switch to MART or step up
7. Consider stepping down when good asthma control has been achieved and maintained for 12 months, to find the lowest treatment that controls patients' symptoms and minimised exposure to side effects.
8. Choose an appropriate time to step back treatment (no respiratory infection, patient is not travelling, not pregnant)

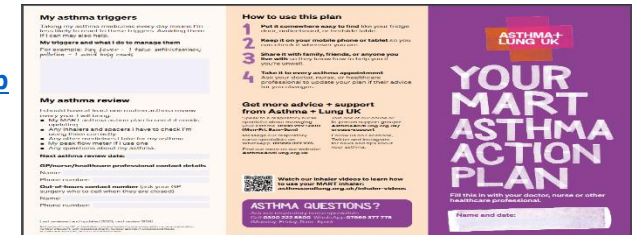
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Appendix 1 MART Action Plan

Both AIR and MART action plans can be accessed via: <https://shop.asthmaandlung.org.uk/collections/new-shop-hcp>

ASTHMA Maintenance and Reliever Therapy (MART) ACTION PLAN



MART is a combined ICS and LABA treatment in a single inhaler, containing both ICS and a fast-acting LABA. It is used for both daily maintenance therapy and the relief of symptoms as required. Licensed MART Inhalers include: Fostair® NEXThaler® 100/6; Symbicort® Turbohaler® 200/6; Duoresp® Spiromax 160/4.5; Fobumix® Easyhaler 160/4.5; Luforbec® MDI 100/6; Fostair® MDI 100/6

1 Every day asthma care:

With this daily routine:

- I should have few or no asthma symptoms during the day and none at night (wheeze, tight chest, feeling breathless, cough).
- I should be able to do everything I normally do in my day-to-day life (working, being active, socialising).
- My personal best peak flow score is:
Date taken

My Maintenance and Reliever Therapy (MART) inhaler is called (insert name):

I need to take my MART inhaler every day even when I feel well.

I take puff(s) in the morning and puff(s) at night.

I use my MART inhaler as my reliever inhaler if I get asthma symptoms.

I take one puff of my MART inhaler if:

- I'm wheezing
- My chest feels tight
- I'm finding it hard to breathe
- I'm coughing.

I can take up to a **maximum** of puffs a day (including my morning and night puffs).

Other medicines and devices (for example, spacer, peak flow meter) I use for my asthma every day:

2 When I feel worse:

My asthma is getting worse if I'm experiencing any of these:

- My symptoms are getting worse (wheeze, tight chest, feeling breathless, cough).
- My symptoms are waking me up at night.
- My symptoms are affecting my day-to-day life (working, being active, socialising).
- My peak flow score drops to below:

If my asthma gets worse:

I can continue to take **one** puff of my MART inhaler as needed to deal with my asthma symptoms, up to a **maximum** of puffs a day (including my morning and night puffs).

URGENT! Contact your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional if:

- You need to use the **maximum** daily dose of your MART inhaler and your symptoms are not improving **or**
- You're regularly using extra doses of your MART inhaler most days for weeks (as advised by your healthcare professional) **or**
- You're worried about your asthma.

Other advice from my doctor, asthma nurse or healthcare professional about what to do if my asthma is worse:

3 When I have an asthma attack:

I'm having an asthma attack if I'm experiencing any of these:

- My MART inhaler is not helping.
- I find it difficult to walk or talk.
- I find it difficult to breathe.
- I'm wheezing a lot, or I have a very tight chest, or I'm coughing a lot.
- My peak flow score is below:

What to do in an asthma attack

- Sit up straight – try to keep calm.
- Take one puff of your MART inhaler **every 1 to 3 minutes up to six puffs.**
- If you feel worse at any point **or** you don't feel better after six puffs **call 999 for an ambulance.**
- If the ambulance has not arrived after 10 minutes and your symptoms are not improving, **repeat step 2.**
- If your symptoms are no better after repeating step 2, and the ambulance has still not arrived, **contact 999 again immediately.**

After an asthma attack

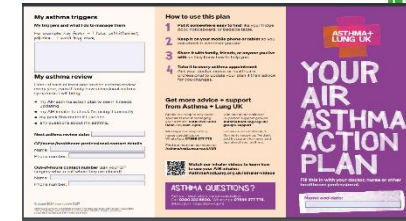
Follow this advice to make sure you recover well and to prevent further asthma attacks:

- If you dealt with your asthma attack at home, see your doctor or nurse today.
- If you were treated in hospital, see your doctor or nurse within 48 hours of being discharged.
- Finish any medicines they prescribe you, even if you start to feel better.
- If you don't improve after treatment, see your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional urgently.

If you don't have your MART inhaler with you and need to use a blue reliever inhaler, take one dose every 30–60 seconds up to a maximum of 10 puffs and call 999 for an ambulance.

Appendix 2 AIR Action plan

Both AIR and MART action plans can be accessed via: <https://shop.asthmaandlung.org.uk/collections/new-shop-hcp>



1 Every day asthma care:

My AIR (anti-inflammatory reliever) inhaler contains:

- a steroid medicine to treat inflammation in my airways
- a reliever medicine called formoterol to open up my airways.

My AIR inhaler is called (insert name)

I carry my AIR inhaler with me every day so I can use it if I get asthma symptoms.

I take **one puff** of my AIR inhaler if:

- I'm wheezing
- My chest feels tight
- I'm finding it hard to breathe
- I'm coughing.

If my symptoms have not improved after a few minutes, I can take another puff.

I should not take more than puffs at any one time.

I can continue to use my AIR inhaler as needed if:

- I have few or no asthma symptoms during the day, and none at night.
- I can do everything I normally do (e.g. working, being active, socialising).
- My peak flow score stays at or around
- I only need to use my AIR inhaler occasionally, as advised by my GP or nurse.

Other advice for managing my asthma every day:

2 When I feel worse:

I need to contact my doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional as soon as possible if I feel worse.

I should contact them if I have any of these signs and symptoms:

- My symptoms are getting worse (wheeze, tight chest, feeling breathless, cough).
- My symptoms are waking me up at night.
- My symptoms are affecting my day-to-day life (working, being active, socialising).
- My peak flow score drops to below:

I should also contact my GP, nurse or healthcare professional as soon as possible if:

I regularly need to use puffs or more of my AIR inhaler in a day.

The **maximum daily dose** of my AIR inhaler is puffs.

Other advice about what to do if my asthma gets worse:

3 When I have an asthma attack:

I'm having an asthma attack if I'm experiencing any of these:

- My AIR inhaler is not helping.
- I find it difficult to walk or talk.
- I find it difficult to breathe.
- I'm wheezing a lot, or I have a very tight chest, or I'm coughing a lot.
- My peak flow score is below:

What to do in an asthma attack

1. Sit up straight – try to keep calm.
2. Take one puff of your AIR inhaler **every 1 to 3 minutes up to six puffs.**
3. If you feel worse at any point **or** you don't feel better after six puffs **call 999 for an ambulance.**
4. If the ambulance has not arrived after 10 minutes and your symptoms are not improving, **repeat step 2.**
5. If your symptoms are no better after repeating step 2, and the ambulance has still not arrived, **contact 999 again immediately.**

If you do not have your AIR inhaler with you, call 999.

After an asthma attack

















Follow this advice to make sure you recover well and to prevent further asthma attacks:





- If you dealt with your asthma attack at home, speak to your doctor or nurse today.
- If you were treated in hospital, speak to your doctor or nurse within 48 hours of being discharged.
- Finish any medicines they prescribe you, even if you start to feel better.
- If you don't improve after treatment, speak to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional urgently.

Appendix 3 Example Inhalers used in asthma management with images. See NEL formulary for full list.


[North East London Joint Formulary Formulary \(nel-jointformulary.nhs.uk\);](https://nel-jointformulary.nhs.uk/)


<https://primarycare.northeastlondon.icb.nhs.uk/home/meds/medicines-guidelines-respiratory/>

ICS		ICS/LABA		ICS/LABA/LAMA	
DPI 	MDI	DPI 	MDI	DPI 	MDI
<p>Beclometasone Easyhaler® 200mcg</p> 	<p>Soprobec® MDI (Beclometasone) 100, 200, 250mcg</p> 	<p>Symbicort Turbohaler® (Budesonide/ Formoterol) 100/6 (MART); 200/6 (MART); 400/12</p> 	<p>Beclometasone/ Formoterol Fostair® MDI 100/6 (MART); 200/6</p> 	<p>Energair Breezhaler® 114/46/136mcg (Indacaterol/ Glycopyrronium/ Mometasone)</p> 	<p>Trimbow® MDI 87/5/9; 172/5/9mcg (Beclometasone/ Formoterol/ Glycopyrronium)</p> 
<p>Pulmicort Turbohaler® (Budesonide) 100, 200, 400mcg</p> 		<p>Fostair NEXThaler® 100/6 (MART); 200/6 (Beclometasone/ Formoterol)</p> 	<p>Luforbec® MDI 100/6 (MART); 200/6</p> 		
		<p>Relvar Ellipta® 92/22; 184/22mcg (Fluticasone Furoate/ Vilanterol)</p> 	<p>Fluticasone propionate/ Salmeterol Combisal® MDI 50/25; 125/25; 250/25</p> 	<p>Trimbow® NEXThaler 88/5/9 mcg (Beclometasone/ Formoterol/ Glycopyrronium)</p>	

SABA	
DPI 	MDI
<p>Salbutamol Easyhaler® 100mcg</p> 	<p>Salamol® MDI 100mcg (Salbutamol)</p> 
<p>Bricanyl Turbohaler® 100mcg (Terbutaline)</p> 	

Spacer to prescribe with MDIs:
Aerochamber Plus Flow-Vu Mouthpiece



 **Low carbon footprint device choice**