ASTHMA TREATMENT GUIDE (ADULTS)

The BTS/SIGN guideline provides a wide range of information and guidance on the treatment of patients with asthma. 
https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/document-library/clinical-information/asthma/btssign-asthma-guideline-2016/

The cost per patient (CPP) for respiratory medicines in NHS Lanarkshire (NHSL) has reduced over the last 5 years however we currently have the second highest CPP in Scotland. This is independent of the higher prevalence of both conditions within NHSL. Safe and cost-effective use of inhaled corticosteroids is of paramount importance.

With these objectives in mind NHSL has reviewed its respiratory formulary options and a step-wise summary can be found in Appendix 1. Further information can be found by accessing the NHSL Formulary.

http://www.medednhsl.com/meded/nhsl_formulary/

STEPPING DOWN THERAPY IN ADULTS>18YEARS

It is important that patients being treated for asthma using inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) are titrated down to the lowest dose that controls their symptoms. 85% of all patients with asthma should be able to achieve control on low to medium dose of inhaled corticosteroids.¹

What is the evidence for stepping-down?

Evidence indicates that optimal asthma control can be achieved with lower doses of ICS than were used previously. Meta analyses have evaluated the efficacy and safety of ICS in asthma, one of which highlighted that over 90% of the clinical benefit was achieved at a total daily dose of 200mcg of fluticasone propionate.² The second found that the dose-response curve for efficacy was relatively flat and the difference between fluticasone propionate 100mcg and 1,000mcg daily is relatively small.³

PRACTICE POINTS

Patients should have their asthma control assessed using a validated symptom control questionnaire (e.g. ACT, RCP or ACQ). Step-down of treatment should be considered for patients whose asthma symptoms are well controlled (see Table 1, Page 2) for at least 12 weeks. Stepping down before this can lead to exacerbations and hospital admissions.⁴

When stepping patients down or changing therapy, prescribers should ensure patients can effectively use the prescribed inhaler device.

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As demonstrated in the graph above, the majority of clinical benefit is seen at lower doses and then tails off. In contrast the dose response curve for side-effects (e.g. bruising and thinning of the skin, glaucoma, cataracts, and decrease in bone mineral density) increases sharply with higher doses of ICS (>500mcg/day fluticasone propionate).

What do the guidelines say about stepping-down?
BTS/SIGN guidelines recommend that the dose of ICS should be titrated to the lowest dose at which effective control of asthma is maintained.1 The decision to step-down therapy should be jointly made between the clinician and the patient. Reductions should be considered every three months, but only if the patient’s symptoms are well controlled. When reducing inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) clinicians should remember that patients deteriorate at different rates. If asthma is controlled with a combination ICS/long acting beta agonist (LABA) inhaler, the preferred approach is to reduce the ICS by approximately 50% whilst continuing the LABA at the same dose.4

NICE guidance advises that combination inhalers may increase adherence to therapy.5 As LABA monotherapy can increase the risk of asthma related deaths, prescribers should consider each patient on an individual basis taking into account patient preference, therapeutic need and the likelihood of adherence with all asthma therapy. Any decision should be taken after having a full discussion with the patient covering the potential consequences; such as reappearance of symptoms and what to do if they occur.2

If control is maintained after stepping-down, further reductions in the ICS should be attempted until a low dose is reached after which the LABA may be stopped.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Well controlled</th>
<th>Partly controlled</th>
<th>Uncontrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daytime symptoms</td>
<td>None (twice or less/week)</td>
<td>&gt;Twice/week</td>
<td>Three or more features of partly controlled asthma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitation on activities</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nocturnal symptoms/awakening</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for reliever/rescue treatment</td>
<td>None (twice or less/week)</td>
<td>&gt;Twice/week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung function (PEF or FEV1)</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>&lt;80% predicted or personal best (if known)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inhaled corticosteroids are now classified as very low (usually paediatric doses), low, medium and high doses. This varies according to drug, particle size and inhaler device. Further information on the categorisation of ICS and ICS/LABA inhalers can be found in the BTS Guidelines (Sept 2016) and Appendix 1 and 3 of this document.

References:

This document is adapted from guidelines produced by Bristol PCT with kind permission from the author (J Gibbs).
**APPENDIX 1:**

**FORMULARY (ADULTS >18YRS)**

### PREFERRED LIST

**HIGH DOSE ICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>Dosage</th>
<th>Cost for 30 days</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fostair</strong></td>
<td>200mcg/6mcg</td>
<td>£29.32*</td>
<td>2 doses twice daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relvar</strong></td>
<td>184mcg/22mcg</td>
<td>£29.50*</td>
<td>1 dose daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LOW DOSE ICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>Dosage</th>
<th>Cost for 30 days</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fosteril Modulite</strong></td>
<td>100mcg</td>
<td>£4.45*</td>
<td>2 doses twice daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qvar</strong></td>
<td>50mcg</td>
<td>£4.72*</td>
<td>2 doses twice daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Easyhaler Budesonide</strong></td>
<td>100mcg</td>
<td>£5.32*</td>
<td>2 doses twice daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MEDIUM DOSE ICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
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<th>Cost for 30 days</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fostair</strong></td>
<td>100mcg/6mcg</td>
<td>£29.32*</td>
<td>2 doses twice daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relvar</strong></td>
<td>92mcg/22mcg</td>
<td>£22.00*</td>
<td>1 dose daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LOW DOSE ICS PLUS LABA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>Dosage</th>
<th>Cost for 30 days</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fostair</strong></td>
<td>100mcg/6mcg</td>
<td>£14.66*</td>
<td>1 dose twice daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relvar</strong></td>
<td>92mcg/22mcg</td>
<td>£22.00*</td>
<td>1 dose daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HIGH DOSE ICS PLUS LABA**

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<th>Dosage</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fostair</strong></td>
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<td>£29.32*</td>
<td>2 doses twice daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relvar</strong></td>
<td>184mcg/22mcg</td>
<td>£29.50*</td>
<td>1 dose daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TOTAL FORMULARY

**Alternative combination inhaler options for patients where preferred list options are not suitable**

**HIGH DOSE ICS**

- **Fostair** 200mcg/6mcg, 2 doses twice daily, £29.32*
- **Relvar** 184mcg/22mcg, 1 dose daily, £29.50*

**MEDIUM DOSE ICS**

- **Fostair** 100mcg/6mcg, 2 doses twice daily, £29.32*
- **Relvar** 92mcg/22mcg, 1 dose daily, £22.00*

**LOW DOSE ICS**

- **Fosteril Modulite** 100mcg, 2 doses twice daily, £4.45*
- **Qvar** 50mcg, 2 doses twice daily, £4.72*
- **Easyhaler Budesonide** 100mcg, 2 doses twice daily, £5.32*

**LOW DOSE ICS**

- **Salbutamol** 100mcg, 1-2 doses when required (Standard pMDI), £1.50 (200 doses)
- **Terbutaline** 500mcg, 1 dose when required, £8.30 (100 doses)

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*Cost for 30 days treatment – Scottish Drug Tariff / MIMS May 2018

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In adults over the age of 18, combined maintenance and reliever therapy can be considered for patients who have a history of asthma attacks on medium dose ICS or ICS/LABA.

Short-acting beta agonists should be prescribed for all patients with symptomatic asthma. Consider moving up if using 3 or more doses per week.
APPENDIX 2: Stepping-down therapy – the process

Has the patient’s asthma been well controlled for at least 3 months?
See Table 1, Page 2

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Step the patient down

1. Check inhaler technique (add spacer to MDI if required)
2. Check exposure to trigger factors
3. Check adherence to therapy and consider any issues which may affect compliance
4. What would be the potential consequences of an exacerbation and does the patient know what to do if this occurs? e.g. does the patient have a self management plan?

Patients using a combination inhaler
1. Identify which combination inhaler the patient is using and select the relevant flow-chart (page 4 & 5)
2. Identify the patient’s current dose and locate where this is positioned in the flow-chart
3. Follow the arrow and prescribe the next recommended inhaler(s)

Patients using a single ICS inhaler
1. Identify which ICS inhaler the patient is using
2. Reduce the ICS dose by 50%
Note: if the patient is prescribed add-on therapies (e.g. montelukast, tiotropium) consider reducing/stopping these one by one after the ICS dose has been reduced to medium/low strength.

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Do not step the patient down

1. Check inhaler technique(add spacer to MDI if required)
2. Check exposure to trigger factors
3. Check adherence to therapy and consider any issues which may affect compliance
   If these have been excluded, step-up therapy

Clinicians should consider:
 Patients achieve asthma control at different rates. Clinicians should have a discussion with the patient to decide whether to trial the current therapy for longer or to step-up again.

Suggested discussion points with the patient:
1. Are there any factors affecting adherence to therapy e.g. polypharmacy, social reasons or beliefs?
2. Are there any issues affecting compliance e.g. dexterity?
3. Is the patient exposed to trigger factors e.g. smoking, pets, pollen or stress?
4. Are there any lifestyle points to consider where asthma stability is crucial e.g. impending exam
5. How long did it take the patient to achieve complete asthma control last time?
6. What would be the potential consequences of an exacerbation and does the patient know what to do if this occurs? e.g. does the patient have a self management plan?
7. What would the patient prefer to do?

Action:
Clinicians should use their professional judgement to decide whether to continue trialling the current therapy, or to step-up again. If continuing on the current therapy for longer, the clinician should advise the patient to monitor their symptoms and SABA use, and review the patient again in 1 month. Patients should be advised to return to clinic if their symptoms become problematic within this time.

Refer to a specialist if necessary.

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Review the patient in 3 months*

Has the patient’s asthma been well controlled over the last 3 months (see Table 1, Page 2)?

(*If you previously stepped the patient up to cover the hay fever season and wish to step them down again, review the patient in 1 month rather than 3 months)

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Step the patient down again and repeat cycle
APPENDIX 3: ASTHMA STEP-DOWN GUIDE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGH DOSE ICS</th>
<th>MEDIUM DOSE ICS</th>
<th>LOW DOSE ICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fostair® pMDI and NextHaler inhaler</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fostair 200/6 Inhaler® 2 puffs BD (£29.32) (Daily dose: 800mcg BDP extra fine particle size +24 mcg formoterol)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fostair 100/6 Inhaler® 1 puff BD (£14.66) (Daily dose: 200mcg BDP extra fine particle size +12mcg formoterol)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relvar® Ellipta inhaler</strong></td>
<td><strong>Relvar Ellipta 184/22mcg® 1 puff OD (£29.50) (Daily dose: 184mcg fluticasone fur. + 22mcg vilanterol)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Relvar Ellipta 92/22mcg® 1 puffs OD (£22.00) (Daily dose: 92mcg fluticasone fur. + 22mcg vilanterol)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY:** Costs – 30 days without spacer (MIMS May 2018). GREEN – Preferred list AMBER – Total formulary

**NB. ALL PATIENTS** with asthma should be provided with a short-acting beta 2 agonist (salbutamol or terbutaline) to aid in the event of an acute exacerbation.

**Beclometasone**
- Clenil Modulite® 100mcg 2 puffs BD (£4.45) (Daily dose: 400mcg BDP)
- Qvar® MDI 50mcg 2 puffs BD (£4.72) (Daily dose: 200mcg BDP extra fine particle size)

**Budesonide**
- Easyhaler® Budesonide 200mcg 1 puff BD (£5.31) (Daily dose: 400mcg Budesonide)
APPENDIX 3: ASTHMA STEP-DOWN GUIDE

**HIGH DOSE ICS**
- DuoResp Spiromax 320/9®
  - 2 puffs BD (£55.94)
  - (Daily dose: 1,600mcg budesonide + 48mcg formoterol)

**MEDIUM DOSE ICS**
- DuoResp Spiromax 160/4.5®
  - 2 puffs BD (£27.97)
  - (Daily dose: 800mcg budesonide + 24mcg formoterol)

**LOW DOSE ICS**
- DuoResp Spiromax 160/4.5®
  - 1 puff BD (£13.99)
  - (Daily dose: 400mcg budesonide + 12mcg formoterol)

**KEY:**
- Costs – 30 days without spacer (MIMS May 2018).
- GREEN – Preferred list
- AMBER – Total formulary

**NB. ALL PATIENTS** with asthma should be provided with a short-acting beta 2 agonist (salbutamol or terbutaline) to aid in the event of an acute exacerbation.

**DuoResp® Spiromax inhaler**

**Symbicort® Turbohaler**
- Symbicort Turbohaler 400/12®
  - 2 puffs BD (£56.00)
  - (Daily dose: 1,600mcg budesonide + 48mcg formoterol)

**Beclometasone**
- Clenil Modulite®
  - 100mcg 2 puffs BD (£4.45)
  - (Daily dose: 400mcg BDP)
  - OR
- Qvar® MDI 50mcg 2 puffs BD (£4.72)
  - (Daily dose: 200mcg BDP extra fine particle size)

**Budesonide**
- Easyhaler®
  - Budesonide 200mcg 1 puff BD (£5.31)
  - (Daily dose: 400mcg Budesonide)

Date: Jun 2018 (Version 7)   Review date: Jun 2020   Produced by NHSL Respiratory MCN and Prescribing Management Team