

## Inhaler devices

There are a variety of inhaler devices available. Some examples are listed below:

- Metered dose inhalers deliver a specific amount of medicine into your lungs when you press down on the inhaler and inhale slowly and deeply through the mouthpiece.
- Breath-actuated metered dose inhalers deliver a specific amount of medicine into your lungs automatically when you inhale slowly and deeply through the mouthpiece.
- Dry powder inhalers deliver the medicine in the form of dry powder as you inhale fast and deeply through the mouthpiece. The dose will often need to be loaded into the mouthpiece prior to inhalation by opening, twisting or adding a capsule.

It is advisable to use a spacer device with metered dose inhalers to make it easier to inhale the medicine and reduce side-effects such as a sore mouth and throat.

A spacer is a tube that fits onto your inhaler. At the other end of the tube is a mouthpiece to slowly breathe in and out of.

A spacer allows you to activate the inhaler then inhale the medicine in two separate steps. This makes taking your inhaler easier as you don't need to co-ordinate breathing and pressing the puffer at the same time.

It is very common to have difficulties with inhalers but it is important to make sure you are using your inhaler properly so you're getting all the benefits from your medicine.

**You should ask your GP, asthma nurse or pharmacist to check your inhaler technique regularly.**

### Contact us:

NHS NEW Devon CCG Clinical Effectiveness and Medicines Optimisation team

CCG Website: [www.newdevonccg.nhs.uk](http://www.newdevonccg.nhs.uk)

Telephone: 01392 205 205

Email: [D-CCG.medicinesoptimisation@nhs.net](mailto:D-CCG.medicinesoptimisation@nhs.net)

### Follow us on:

Facebook - search for NEWDevonCCG

Twitter - search for @NEWDevonCCG

**This leaflet is also available in Braille, large print and other languages on request**



Northern, Eastern and Western Devon  
Clinical Commissioning Group

## Understanding your asthma medication



**Every 10 seconds someone in the UK has a potentially life-threatening asthma attack. Are you at risk?**



## Understanding your asthma medication

Asthma medication is usually given by inhalation, using a variety of different devices.

It is important that you understand how your inhalers work and that you have your inhaler technique checked regularly by a healthcare professional to ensure you are getting the most from your inhaler.

There are two main types of inhaled medication for asthma:

### Reliever inhalers

The main type of reliever medication is a short acting beta<sup>2</sup> agonist (SABA).

They work quickly by relaxing the muscles surrounding your narrowed airways, allowing your airways to open wider and therefore making it easier for you to breathe.



They often work within minutes and last three to five hours. It is important that you keep your reliever inhaler with you at all times as it works fast and therefore is effective at treating asthma attacks.

Some relievers can temporarily increase your heart rate, or give mild muscle shakes; this is normally only when you use your inhaler more than prescribed.

If you are needing your reliever more than twice a week your asthma is not well controlled and you are at higher risk of an asthma attack.

***Three people die every day from asthma attacks, despite research showing two of these deaths could be prevented.***

### Preventer inhalers

Your preventer inhaler works to stop you having symptoms in the first place, and means you are less likely to need your reliever.

The main type of preventer inhaler is inhaled corticosteroids. Preventers come in a variety of colours, though the most common ones are brown or purple.

They work to prevent the amount of inflammation in your airways.

This eases the swelling and narrowing of your airways and also reduces the amount of mucus that your lungs produce.



Preventer inhalers do not give you immediate effects. The protective effect builds up over time and it can take up to seven days for preventer medicines to work.

Once they start working, you may not need to use your reliever inhaler at all. If you stop using the preventer inhaler, the protection it gives your airways will start to reduce.

You may need to take alternative or additional preventer medication if your asthma is not completely controlled.

These may include inhalers such as a long acting beta<sup>2</sup> agonist (reliever) and inhaled corticosteroid in combination.

Oral medication like montelukast and theophylline can also be added.

**If you have any concerns about how you are using your medication for asthma, please speak to your GP, nurse or pharmacist for further advice.**