

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Inhaled corticosteroids for the treatment of chronic asthma in children under the age of 12 years

NICE 'technology appraisal guidance' advises on when and how drugs and other treatments should be used in the NHS.

This leaflet is about the use of **inhaled corticosteroids** to treat children with chronic asthma in the NHS in England and Wales. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). It is written for parents and carers of children with chronic asthma but it may also be useful for children with chronic asthma themselves, or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe chronic asthma or the treatments in detail – a member of your healthcare team should discuss these with you. Some sources of further information and support are on the back page.

This may not be the only possible treatment for chronic asthma. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether inhaled corticosteroids are suitable for your child and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

If inhaled corticosteroids are appropriate for children aged under 12 years who have chronic asthma, the least expensive product that is suitable for the individual child should be used.

If both an inhaled corticosteroid and a long-acting beta-2 agonist are needed, then a combination device that contains both medicines may be used. The decision to use a combination device should be based on the individual child and their asthma. If a combination device is chosen, the least expensive device that is suitable for the individual child should be used.

Chronic asthma

Asthma is a common condition which causes the airways to become narrower. Children with asthma have difficulty breathing, wheezing, coughing and feel a tightness in their chest. These symptoms get worse when they have an 'asthma attack'. Asthma symptoms can be triggered by a number of factors, including an infection, allergy, smoke or exercise. Children with chronic asthma have asthma symptoms over a long period of time.

Inhaled corticosteroids

Corticosteroids are a group of medicines that are used to treat chronic asthma. When they are inhaled, they go directly into the lungs and help to reduce inflammation and swelling in the airways. This helps the child to breathe more normally again. Inhaled corticosteroids are used to prevent asthma attacks so should be taken regularly.

What does this mean for me?

When NICE recommends a treatment, the NHS must ensure it is available to those people it could help, normally within 3 months of the guidance being issued. If your child has chronic asthma, and your doctor thinks that inhaled corticosteroids are the right treatment, your doctor should follow the guidance explained in this leaflet. Please see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance if your child appears to be eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

More information

The organisations below can provide more information on chronic asthma and support for you and your child. Please note that NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- Action for Sick Children, 0800 074 4519
www.actionforsickchildren.org
- Action Against Allergy, 020 8892 2711
www.actionagainstallergy.co.uk
- Allergy UK, 01322 619 898
www.allergyuk.org
- Asthma UK, 08457 01 02 03
www.asthma.org.uk

NHS Direct online (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) may be a good starting point for finding out more. Your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) may also be able to give you further advice and support.

About NICE

NICE produces guidance (advice) for the NHS about preventing, diagnosing and treating different medical conditions. The guidance is written by independent experts including healthcare professionals and people representing patients and carers. They consider all the research on the disease or treatment, talk to people affected by it, and consider the costs involved. Staff working in the NHS are expected to follow this guidance.

To find out more about NICE, its work and how it reaches decisions, see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance

This leaflet and other versions of the guidance aimed at healthcare professionals are available at www.nice.org.uk/TA131

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference N1401).