

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Inhaled corticosteroids for the treatment of chronic asthma in adults and in children aged 12 years and over

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 adults and children aged 12 years and over 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 people with chronic asthma but it may also be useful for their families or carers 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 you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

If inhaled corticosteroids are appropriate for adults and children aged 12 years and over who have chronic asthma, the least expensive product that is suitable for the individual 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 and their asthma. If a combination device is chosen, the least expensive device that is suitable for the individual should be used.

Chronic asthma

Asthma is a common condition which causes the airways to become narrower. People 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. People 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 person 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 you have 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 you appear to be eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

More information

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

- 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
- British Lung Foundation, 08458 50 50 20
www.lunguk.org

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/TA138

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N1496).

We encourage NHS and voluntary sector organisations to use text from this leaflet in their own information about chronic asthma.