

Local Supply Issues – Inhalers; Salbutamol, ICS and ICS/LABA Combinations

Updated: 21st May 2020

Background

- At present in the UK there is significant demand in the supply chain for Respiratory Inhaler products and this is leading to wholesalers suffering from out of stock situations. This is not a Coronavirus related supply issue but is linked to increased demand. Demand is reported for certain inhalers to be up by 400% from usual business.¹
- The majority of manufacturers that our Medicines Optimisation Team have contacted have confirmed that stock is available of inhalers and being delivered regularly to the three major wholesalers AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix, in addition to several other smaller distributors.
- However, due to increased demand at wholesaler level, the stocks that are being delivered by the manufacturer are rapidly become depleted.
- It is this increase in demand that is resulting in local shortages within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- We are still receiving reports from Community Pharmacy colleagues that they are seeing an exceptional increase in the number of patients presenting prescriptions for inhalers.
- In some instances, the patients concerned have not requested these on prescription for many years and actually may no longer require this treatment.

Alternative agents and management options

We need our prescribers to think very carefully about whether there is a continued need for these inhalers when requested and also consider taking the following actions urgently:

- Discuss with those patients who have not ordered a repeat prescription for an inhaler for more than 4 months if this is still clinically required. It is important that good control is maintained. Patients should be assessed on an individual basis. For example, if the patient is receiving regular short-acting beta-2 agonist inhalers (e.g. salbutamol) and are now requesting an inhaled corticosteroid (ICS) then this is most likely to be an appropriate issue, compared to those who have had no type of inhaler at all.¹
- If the inhaler is deemed necessary, **please continue to only write monthly repeat prescriptions, i.e. prescribe only a quantity of ONE inhaler at a time, rather than writing a prescription for several months.**¹ Consider using eRD or post-dated prescription where the inhaler is used regularly and only for the prescribing interval deemed is appropriate based on the dose prescribed and the number of actuations in the inhaler.¹
- Encourage patients NOT to stockpile inhalers at home and to order prescriptions as per their advice from their medical practice.¹
- Pharmacies/dispensaries should only order supplies through the wholesalers for prescriptions that require dispensing and to replace stocks to minimal levels – please do not stockpile inhalers.¹
- Ensure patients are aware of dose counters on inhalers (where applicable) and to know how to recognise if their inhaler requires replacing.

Based on local shortages for inhaler devices reported to the Medicines Optimisation Team over the last week, we have put together the following tables which demonstrates availability of inhaler devices for SABA, ICS and ICS/LABA combination inhalers used for both asthma and COPD indications.

Where patients do not have sufficient supplies of their usual inhalers, patients should be supported, in the first instance, to liaise with local pharmacies directly to ascertain their stock levels as different pharmacies use a range of wholesalers.

Switching inhalers to manage the supply chain¹

- Avoid switching between different types of inhalers unless essential to ensure continuity of patient treatment. If an alternative inhaler is required try and ensure patients are switched to an alternative class of inhaler device (i.e. Aerosol (e.g. pMDI, Easi-Breathe, Autohaler) or Dry powder inhalers).
- Switching patients may put additional strain onto the alternate inhaler supply chain therefore should only be considered where no local stocks of their usual inhaler(s) are available.
- Where supplies of the patient's usual inhalers are not available, this table may be used as a guide to support in finding alternative inhalers devices. In certain circumstances, where none of the patient's usual inhaler is available, it may be necessary to switch patients, where clinically appropriate.
- The British Thoracic Society (BTS) have put together information on inhaler dose comparison also that you may find helpful (available at: <https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/document-library/quality-improvement/covid-19/bts-information-respiratory-inhalers/>).
- Consult the SPC (www.medicines.org.uk) for products, particularly to confirm licensing and indication.
- It is important to counsel the patient and their carers as appropriate, about any change to their medication BEFORE any change is made. This is especially important when a new device is prescribed, so that the patient is counselled accordingly on how to use the device correctly. Face to face counselling may not be appropriate at this current time but please refer patients to the Asthma UK or Right Breathe website below.
- The Asthma UK website (available at: <https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos>) and Right Breathe website (available at: <https://www.rightbreathe.com/>) provide information on all inhaler devices available including training videos demonstrating correct inhaler technique to support you in counselling patients.

SHORT ACTING BETA-2 AGONISTS (SABA)

SALBUTAMOL

Salbutamol pMDIs are the only inhaler device which may be prescribed generically to facilitate local supply issues.

<i>Brand, Inhaler type (Manufacturer)</i>	<i>Strength</i>	<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Stock Availability</i>
Salbutamol Easyhaler (Orion Pharma)	100mcg	From aged 4 years	Available – no issues reported.
	200mcg		
Salamol pMDI (Converse Pharma Group)	100mcg	Adults and children	Available through AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix.
Salamol Easi-Breathe BAI (Teva)	100mcg	From aged 4 years	Available.
Airomir pMDI and Autohaler (BAI) (Teva)	100mcg	Paediatric license held but no age specified.	Available through AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix.
Ventolin Evohaler pMDI (GlaxoSmithKline)	100mcg	From aged 4 years	Available through AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix. GSK have adequate stock in the UK supply chain.
Ventolin Accuhaler BAI (GlaxoSmithKline)	200mcg	From aged 4 years	Available through AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix. GSK have adequate stock in the UK supply chain.

*Please note that the doses demonstrated, do not cover every dose that is available for each device. Therefore, the equivalent dose of beclometasone dipropionate (BDP) may need to be worked out individually for doses which are not listed. Please do not hesitate to contact the Medicines Optimisation Team for further support on the BDP equivalent doses for individual patients via CAPCCG.prescribingpartnership@nhs.net.

****Whilst it might seem appropriate to prescribe inhalers generically (specifically beclometasone dipropionate) this is NOT RECOMMENDED due to formulations with different particles sizes and therefore differing potencies.**

INHALED CORTICOSTEROID INHALERS (ICS)						
BECLOMETASONE DIPROPIONATE (STANDARD PARTICLE SIZES)						
Brand, Inhaler type (Manufacturer)	Strength	Dose*	Corticosteroid total daily dose	Beclometasone dipropionate (BDP) equivalent dose	Age Range	Stock Availability
Clenil Modulite pMDI (Chiesi) <i>Licensed for use in Asthma only.</i>	50mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	200mcg	200mcg	Children and adults. The 200mcg and 250mcg are not licensed in children.	Available - Clenil Modulite® 100 microgram MDI - Release of batches of different appearance and without dose indicator (Chiesi) – see netFormulary and below for further information. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These inhalers contain the same medication as before, beclometasone, and therefore require no change to either the way prescriptions are written, or the way patients manage their asthma. • Medicine is provided in the same inhaler device (pressurised metered dose inhaler; pMDI).
	100mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	400mcg	400mcg		
	200mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	800mcg	800mcg		
	250mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	1000mcg	1000mcg		

					<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The only differences in the batch variation are related to the appearance: the colours of the plastic actuator and protective cap are beige and yellow respectively (instead of brown and beige respectively); the beige actuator is not embossed, there is no dose indicator, however patients who received Clenil 100mcg prior to September 2019 (when this feature was added to the inhaler) may not notice that a dose indicator is not included.• The differences have no effect on the safety profile (adverse effects) of the medicine, however, patients should have increased vigilance for when they may need a new inhaler and should confirm the dosage on the labelling of the outer package and canister.• Carefully check the dosage of the Clenil 100mcg inhaler written on the labelling on the packaging, prior to dispensing as the Clenil 100mcg; this medicine is a very similar colour to Clenil 50mcg. Patients/caregivers should also be advised to check the dosage on the labelling on the package and the canister. See their website for further information: https://www.chiesi.uk.com/supply-of-chiesi-products
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Soprobe pMDI (Glenmark) <i>Licensed for use in Asthma only.</i>	50mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	200mcg	200mcg	Children and adults. The 200mcg and 250mcg are not licensed in children.	Available – Glenmark are increasing production as much as possible to cope with the demand. Issues - Nationwide there is limited availability of 50mcg Soprobe in general. There are expected further larger supplies into the country at the end of May.
	100mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	400mcg	400mcg		
	200mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	800mcg	800mcg		
	250mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	1000mcg	1000mcg		
Easyhaler Beclometasone BAI (Orion) <i>Licensed for use in Asthma only.</i>	200mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	800mcg	800mcg	Adults only.	Available – AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix.
BECLOMETASONE DIPROPIONATE (**EXTRA FINE PARTICLE SIZES): <i>Please note that Kelhale and Qvar are not interchangeable with Clenil Modulite and Soprobe. Kelhale and Qvar have extra fine particles and are approximately twice as potent as Clenil Modulite and Soprobe.</i>						
Kelhale pMDI (Cipla) <i>Licensed for use in Asthma only.</i>	50mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	200mcg	400mcg	Adults only	Available – 50mcg and 100mcg are both available from AAH, Alliance Healthcare, Phoenix and two smaller distributors.
	100mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	400mcg	800mcg		
Qvar pMDI, Autohaler BAI and Easi-Breathe BAI (Teva) <i>Licensed for use in Asthma only.</i>	50mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	200mcg	400mcg	Qvar pMDI and Autohaler are licensed for children aged 5 and above. Qvar Easi- Breather is	Issues – 100mcg pMDI shortages are being reported by AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix. Available: – 50mcg pMDI is available from Phoenix.
	100mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	400mcg	800mcg		

					licensed aged 12 and above.	-50mcg and 100mcg Autohalers are available at AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix. -50mcg Easi-breathe is available at AAH, Alliance and Phoenix. -100mcg Easi-breathe is available from AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix.
BUDESONIDE						
Pulmicort Turbohaler BAI (AstraZeneca) <i>Licensed for use in Asthma only.</i>	100mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	200mcg	200mcg	From aged 5 years.	Available – AAH.
	200mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	400mcg	400mcg		
	400mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	800mcg	800mcg		
Easyhaler Budesonide BAI (Orion) <i>Licensed for use in Asthma only.</i>	100mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	200mcg	200mcg	Children 6 years and over and adults	Available – AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix.
	200mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	400mcg	400mcg		
	400mg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	800mcg	800mcg		
FLUTICASONE PROPIONATE						
Flixotide Evohaler pMDI (GlaxoSmithKline)	50mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	200mcg	400mcg	Children over 4 years and adults.	Available - AAH, Alliance and Phoenix.

<i>Licensed for use in Asthma only.</i>	125mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	500mcg	1000mcg	The maximum licensed dose in children is 200 micrograms twice daily.	
	250mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	1000mcg	2000mcg		
Flixotide Accuhaler BAI (GlaxoSmithKline) <i>Licensed for use in Asthma only.</i>	50mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	100mcg	200mcg	Children over 4 years and adults. The maximum licensed dose in children is 200 micrograms twice daily.	Available - AAH, Alliance and Phoenix.
	100mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	200mcg	400mcg		
	250mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	500mcg	1000mcg		
	500mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	1000mcg	2000mcg		

****Whilst it might seem appropriate to prescribe inhalers generically (specifically beclomethasone dipropionate) this is NOT RECOMMENDED due to formulations with different particles sizes and therefore differing potencies.**

INHALED CORTICOSTEROID AND LONG ACTING BETA-2 AGONIST COMBINATION INHALERS (ICS/LABA)						
BUDESONIDE/FORMOTEROL FUMARATE DIHYDRATE						
Brand, Inhaler type (Manufacturer)	Strength	Dose	Corticosteroid total daily dose	Beclomethasone dipropionate (BDP) equivalent dose	Age Range	Stock Availability
Symbicort Turbohaler BAI (AstraZeneca) <i>Licensed for use in both Asthma and COPD.</i>	100/6mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	400mcg	400mcg	Maintenance therapy from 6 years. MART from 12 years.	Available – no supply issues reported. All strengths available through AAH.
	200/6mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	800mcg	800mcg	Maintenance therapy from 12 years. MART from 12 years.	
	400/12mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	800mcg	800mcg	Maintenance therapy from 18 years.	
DuoResp Spiromax BAI (Teva) <i>Licensed for use in both Asthma and COPD.</i>	160/4.5mcg (equivalent to a metered dose of 200/6mcg)	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	400mcg	400mcg	From 18 years of age.	Available – supplies going weekly to wholesalers.

	320/9mcg (equivalent to a metered dose of 400/12mcg)	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	800mcg	800mcg		
FLUTICASONE PROPIONATE/SALMETEROL XINAFOATE						
AirFluSal pMDI (Sandoz)	125/25mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	500mcg	1000mcg	From 18 years.	Available – Both strengths available through wholesalers.
	250/25mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	1000mcg	2000mcg		
Combisal pMDI (Aspire Pharma) <i>For use in Asthma only.</i>	50/25mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	200mcg	400mcg	From 4 years.	Available – Releasing orders to wholesalers weekly, namely AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix.
	125/25mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	500mcg	1000mcg		
	250/25mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	1000mcg	2000mcg		

Sereflo pMDI (Fannin) <i>For use in Asthma only.</i>	125/25mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	500mcg	1000mcg	From 18 years.	Available – no issues reported from Cipla.
	250/25mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	1000mcg	2000mcg		
Seretide Evohaler pMDI (GlaxoSmithKline) <i>For use in Asthma only.</i>	50/25mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	200mcg	400mcg	From 4 years.	Available – AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix are being delivered to depots as usual.
	125/25mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	500mcg	1000mcg		
	250/25mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	1000mcg	2000mcg		
Seretide Accuhaler BAI (GlaxoSmithKline) <i>For use in Asthma and COPD.</i>	100/50mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	200mcg	400mcg	From 4 years – maximum licensed dose for fluticasone delivered by Seretide Accuhaler is 100mcg BD.	Available – all strengths via AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix.
	250/50mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	500mcg	1000mcg		

	500/50mcg	Inhale ONE puff twice a day	1000mcg	2000mcg	Doses above this are licensed for over 12 years.	
Sirdupla pMDI (Mylan) <i>For use in Asthma only.</i>	125/25mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	500mcg	1000mcg	From 18 years.	Available – Both strengths in stock and available through AAH, Alliance and Phoenix.
	250/25mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	1000mcg	2000mcg		
BECLOMETASONE DIPROPIONATE/FORMOTEROL FUMARATE DIHYDRATE (**EXTRA FINE PARTICLE SIZES)						
Fostair pMDI (Chiesi) <i>Fostair 100/6 pMDI is licensed for use in both Asthma and COPD.</i> <i>Fostair 200/6 pMDI is licensed for use in Asthma only.</i>	100/6mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	400mcg	1000mcg	From 18 years.	Available – supplying products weekly to wholesalers. See their website for further information: https://www.chiesi.uk.com/supply- of-chiesi-products
	200/6mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	800mcg	2000mcg		
FLUTICASONE PROPIONATE/ FORMOTEROL FUMARATE DIHYDRATE						
Flutiform pMDI (NAPP Pharmaceuticals) <i>For use in Asthma only.</i>	50/5mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	200mcg	400mcg	From 5 years	Available - All 3 strengths available from AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix.

	125/5mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	500mcg	1000mcg	From 12 years	
	250/10mcg	Inhale TWO puffs twice a day	1000mcg	2000mcg	From 18 years	
FLUTICASONE FUROATE/ VILANTEROL						
Relvar Ellipta BAI (GlaxoSmithKline) <i>Relvar 92mcg/22mcg is licenced for both in Asthma and COPD.</i> <i>Relvar 184mcg/22mcg is licensed for Asthma only.</i>	100/25mcg	Inhale ONE puff once daily	100mcg	1000mcg	From 12 years	Available – GSK are reporting no stock issues through AAH, Alliance Healthcare and Phoenix.
	200/25mcg	Inhale ONE puff once daily	200mcg	2000mcg		

Key:

MART = maintenance and reliever therapy
pMDI = pressurised metered-dose inhaler
BAI = breath-actuated inhaler

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