

Better asthma outcomes for patients and planet

*The***AHSN***Network*

Developed by

**Kent Surrey Sussex
Academic Health Science
Network**

Oxford 
Academic Health
Science Network



Wessex
Academic Health
Science Network

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Climate change poses a major threat to public health.

It is a critical issue impacting patients, health professionals, suppliers and the public. Healthcare has a central role to play in the shift to a lower carbon economy, and consequently the NHS is committed to being a proactive and positive force in that transition.

In 2020, NHS England became the first health service in the world to commit to net zero, however identifying a decarbonisation pathway for a complex system like the NHS is challenging. Medicines account for 25% of emissions in the NHS, with inhalers accounting for 3% of these.¹ The carbon footprint of asthma inhalers varies greatly. For example, metered dose inhalers (MDIs) contain hydrofluorocarbon propellants which are powerful greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming and have an estimated carbon footprint of 500g CO₂eq per dose. Dry powder inhalers (DPIs), however, do not use these propellants and have substantially lower global warming potential, an estimate 20g CO₂eq per dose.²

Respiratory diseases affect one in five people and are the third biggest cause of death in England. As stated in the NHS Long Term Plan, the NHS is looking to improve prescribing and support for patients using their inhalers correctly. This resource aims to support healthcare professionals with those decisions.

The resources identified in this document are some of the options available to support respiratory professionals on the topics of asthma solutions, winter pressures, greener prescribing and net zero. Other resources may also be available; this list is not exhaustive.



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¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/a-net-zero-nhs/areas-of-focus/>

² <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng80/resources/asthma-inhalers-and-climate-change-patient-decision-aid-pdf-6727144573>

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Support for healthcare professionals on:

Optimising effective inhaler prescribing

Choosing the right inhaler is important. These resources can help you find the right inhaler for your patient and provide guidance on optimal inhaler technique.



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Support for healthcare professionals on:

Reducing the carbon footprint of inhaler prescribing

Some types of inhalers have a larger carbon footprint. These resources offer guidance to reduce the footprint of inhaler prescribing and safely and effectively change inhalers.



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Support for healthcare professionals on:

Identification of severe asthma in adults

Clinicians can play an important role in identifying patients with severe asthma. SPECTRA primary care clinical system resources have been developed to help identify adults with potential severe asthma, optimise treatment and, where required, refer them to severe asthma centres. You must register for the resource.

* SPECTRA is a Donated Service Programme funded by AstraZeneca and developed in collaboration with the NHS.

Supporting patients with advice and guidance

Patients may want to be directed to resources to read. These resources offer support and information regarding the carbon footprint of inhalers directly to patients.

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Support for healthcare professionals on:

Steps to boost capacity and resilience

It is imperative we improve operational resilience. This resource looks at key actions that are being taken, and a letter from Amanda Pritchard, Chief Executive Officer of NHS England, on winter resilience plans.

General respiratory disease guidance

For general information on respiratory disease and a collection of other resources.

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Frequently asked questions

These resources highlight the frequently asked questions around respiratory care.

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The resources here are based on a snapshot taken late 2022 and presents information available at that time without judgement or recommendation.