

Stock shortages of prescribed respiratory inhaled products – advice on prescribing responsibly during the COVID-19 pandemic

The London Procurement Partnership and the London Respiratory Network are appealing to all health care professionals involved in the prescribing of inhaled respiratory products to **help maintain a stable supply chain by not writing multiple prescriptions** for the same products until the acute pressures on the health service begin to ease.

The prescribing and dispensing of larger than usual quantities of inhaled respiratory medicines is causing shortages of more than one product in the respiratory portfolio. During these unprecedented times, it is really important that we do not overprescribe items, as this may mean that some patients will not be able to get their routine inhaled medicines. During the COVID-19 emergency period, it is even more important that we do not waste essential medicines. We must all work together to try to maintain a stable and sufficient supply chain so that all patients can receive the medicines that they really need. **PLEASE THEREFORE DO NOT OVERPRESCRIBE.**

Advice for prescribers when switching from one inhaled product to another:

During the emergency period related to COVID 19, it may become necessary to switch patients from one inhaled product to another when there are supply issues. If prescribers are issuing alternative treatments, then it is important that this is done in parallel to a patient's personal asthma action plan (PAAP) and using a shared decision-making approach to identify what is the most suitable alternative for a patient. Please see links below:

<https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/manage-your-asthma/action-plan/>

<https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/child/manage/action-plan/>

If the device is changed, it is important the inhaler technique is taught via video link where possible, and supplemented with a video to reinforce understanding. Below are free to use resources for patients, carers, parents and clinicians that provide tutorial videos and supplementary information:

<https://www.rightbreathe.com>

<https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos/>

Advice to pharmacies

LPCs and contractors have reported several instances of prescribers extending prescription durations. Following discussions with PSNC regarding this, NHSE&I and DHSC have issued strong guidance discouraging such changes to prescribing duration as this has a negative impact on the supply chain.

<https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/availability-of-clenil-chiesi/>

If contractors see that this guidance is not being followed locally, they should raise the issue with their LPC in the first instance, for escalation to local area teams. Pharmacies have also been asked not to support any patients trying to stockpile.

Advice to manufacturers and wholesalers

Please keep medicines optimisation and pharmacy teams up to date with stock issues and advise wholesalers to monitor orders from community pharmacies so there is enough to go around the country and help limit stockpiling.

