

Prescribing tip for information for clinicians who see respiratory patients (GPs, nurses, pharmacists)



Caution when issuing inhaler devices – risk of duplication of LABA/SAMA/LAMA/ICS

Work which was initially completed as part of the Medicines Optimisation CCG Workplan for 2019/20 has recently been repeated and has again raised concerns around the safety of prescribed inhaler devices in some patients. This prescribing tip is being reissued to hopefully raise awareness of these concerns.

- The www.rightbreathe.com website lists 120 inhalers which are currently licensed in the UK for both asthma and COPD.¹ This website is an excellent resource containing a summary of treatment pathways, product information for all inhalers and devices available in the UK, together with videos of how to use each inhaler.
- The listed inhalers contain one or more of the following types of drug class:
 - Short-acting beta-2 agonist (SABA)
 - Long-acting beta-2 agonist (LABA)
 - Short-acting anti-muscarinic (SAMA)
 - Long-acting anti-muscarinic (LAMA)
 - Inhaled corticosteroid (ICS)
 - Cromoglicate and related therapies

Several patients have been identified as being issued with more than one inhaler containing the same drug class e.g. a LAMA/LABA/ICS inhaler prescribed with a LAMA inhaler.

This increases the risk of side-effects associated with that type of drug class e.g. if a patient is prescribed two LAMAs they would be more at risk of common side-effects such as arrhythmias; cough; dizziness; dry mouth; headache; nausea.² N.B. the regular prescription of a SAMA in addition to a LAMA is not recommended in the BNF.³

Patients should not be prescribed more than one inhaler containing the same drug class^{*}

* With the exception of:

- patients with brittle asthma who may, under the supervision of a specialist, be prescribed more than one inhaler containing an inhaled corticosteroid;
- the prescription of a SABA + LABA (reliever + preventer)³

Action for prescribers

- **Always consider which ingredients are contained in the inhalers a patient is prescribed and to which drug class they belong before issuing them, in order to ensure there is no duplication of drug class. See appendix 1 for tables of common ingredients, their drug classes and inhalers containing these.**
- **When starting a new inhaler, which contains one or more ingredients from the previous inhaler (e.g. moving from LABA/LAMA to LABA/LAMA/ICS), always stop the original inhaler.** There have been instances where the original inhaler has been left on repeat in case the new one does not suit the patient and they need to revert to the original. However, leaving both inhalers on repeat increases the risk that both will be issued at the same time and does not provide an accurate reflection of the patient's current medication list which may be needed if admitted to hospital, for instance.

References

1. www.rightbreathe.com accessed 01/09/21
2. [BNF online](#) accessed 01/09/21
3. [BNF online chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](#) accessed 01/09/21

Appendix 1

Table 1
Common ingredients and the drug class to which they belong

LAMA	LABA	ICS
tiotropium	formoterol	beclometasone
aclidinium	indacaterol	fluticasone
glycopyrronium	salmeterol	mometasone
umeclidinium	olodaterol	budesonide
	vilanterol	ciclesonide

Table 2
Commonly prescribed inhalers for COPD and the drug classes to which they belong (not comprehensive – see www.rightbreathe.com for full list of inhalers for both asthma and COPD)

LABA	LAMA	LABA/LAMA	LABA/ICS	LABA/LAMA/ICS
	Incruse Ellipta®	Anoro Ellipta®	Relvar Ellipta®	Trelegy Ellipta®
Striverdi Respimat®	Spiriva® and Spiriva Respimat®	Spiolto Respimat®	Fostair®	Trimbow®
Oxis®	Eklira Genuair®	Duaklir Genuair®	Symbicort®	
Onbrez Breezhaler®	Seebri Breezhaler®	Ultibro Breezhaler®		

Use table 1 and EMIS drug information to cross-reference inhaler ingredients and the drug class to which they belong or check www.rightbreathe.com which lists both ingredients and drug class.

To contact the Medicines Optimisation Team please phone 01772 214302

If you have any suggestions for future topics to cover in our prescribing tips please contact Nicola.schaffel@nhs.net