Asthma Therapy: Quick Reference Guide

What is Asthma?²
Asthma is a chronic condition characterized by long-term airway inflammation and respiratory symptoms such as wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness, and cough. These symptoms and breathing limitations can vary in intensity.

Non-Pharmacological Asthma Interventions²
- Trigger avoidance
- Regular exercise
- Breathing exercises
- Smoking Cessation

The Importance of Inhaler Use and Adherence¹,²,⁴
Asthma is a disease of increasing prevalence that affects about 25 million people in the US. 2018 Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) guidelines recommend an inhaled corticosteroids, in addition to a short-acting beta agonist, and education about correct inhaler technique in order to properly manage asthma symptoms and improve quality of life.

Patients who are not using or not adherent with first-line therapy or who have uncontrolled asthma are at greater risk for asthma attacks, declining lung function, hospitalizations, and death.

Barriers to Inhaler Adherence²,³
- Insurance and cost
- Poor health literacy
- Desire for immediate relief
- Fear of steroid side effects
- Limited patient education
- Little knowledge of inhaler types
- Poor inhaler technique

Classifying Asthma²,³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation Over Past 2-4 weeks</th>
<th>Mild Intermittent</th>
<th>Mild Persistent</th>
<th>Moderate Persistent</th>
<th>Severe Persistent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daytime Asthma Symptoms</td>
<td>≤ 2 days per month</td>
<td>≤ 2 days per week</td>
<td>3-6 times per week, but NOT daily</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nighttime Asthma Awakenings</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1-4 per month (≤1 per week)</td>
<td>2-6 times per week</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exacerbations in the Past Year</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>≤ 1</td>
<td>&gt; 1</td>
<td>&gt; 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEV₁ or FEV₁/FVC</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>FEV₁ 60-80%</td>
<td>FEV₁ &lt;60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FEV₁/FVC &lt;5-10%</td>
<td>FEV₁/FVC &lt;10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred Initial Therapy</td>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Step 4/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initial therapy should be based on the most severe category the patient experienced.

Prepared by: G. Myhre, K. Pastagia, PharmD Candidates; N. Caballes, PharmD, MS, CRC. Sept 2018. IL DUR Board approval 9-15-2018
### Stepwise Asthma Treatment Approach²,³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Reliever Medication</th>
<th>Controller Medication</th>
<th>Illinois Medicaid Preferred Agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SABA as needed**</td>
<td>Low Dose ICS</td>
<td>ProAir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SABA as needed**</td>
<td>Low Dose ICS</td>
<td>Proventil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SABA as needed**</td>
<td>Low Dose ICS/LABA</td>
<td>ProAir PLUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SABA as needed**</td>
<td>Medium dose ICS/LABA</td>
<td>ProAir PLUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5*</td>
<td>SABA as needed**</td>
<td>High dose ICS/LABA</td>
<td>ProAir</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **SABA:** Short-Acting Beta Agonist  
- **ICS:** Inhaled Corticosteroid  
- **LABA:** Long-Acting Beta Agonist

*Refer to specialist for add-on treatment  
**Regularly assess overuse of SABA (>1 canister monthly)

### Role of Montelukast, an LTRA, in Asthma Therapy⁵

Montelukast may be used in combination with or as an alternative to inhaled corticosteroids in patients who have a contraindication to inhaled corticosteroids. Montelukast is most effective in patients with concurrent allergic rhinitis. Unlike inhaled corticosteroids, montelukast has not been shown to significantly decrease frequency of hospitalizations, decrease courses of prednisone for exacerbations, or increase number of asthma symptom-free days.

### Role of Theophylline, a Methylxanthine, in Asthma Therapy²,³

Theophylline is a mild-moderate bronchodilator that may be used as alternative therapy for step 2 (mild persistent asthma) or as adjunctive therapy to an inhaled corticosteroid for children ≥ 5 years old. Theophylline is not recommended for routine use in patients with asthma due to inconvenience of monitoring serum levels, high number of side effects, and numerous drug interactions.

### Assessment and Monitoring of Asthma Control²

#### Initial Visit
- Assess Asthma Severity and Initiate Treatment
- Instruct on proper spacer use with inhalers with patient demonstration of technique
  
  [www.aerochambervhc.com/instructions-for-use](http://www.aerochambervhc.com/instructions-for-use)
- Establish Asthma Action Plan

#### Follow-Up Visits
- Assess asthma control, adherence, and inhaler technique (with or without spacer device/ mask).
- Assess overuse of SABA (>1 canister/ month).
- Adjust PRN prescription refills as appropriate.
- Determine therapy adjustments: step-up, step-down, or maintain treatment.
- Measure spirometry every 1-2 years or more often if asthma is uncontrolled.

#### Frequency of Patient Follow-up
- Every 2-6 weeks while gaining control
- Every 1-6 months to monitor control
- Every 3 months if step-down or step-up therapy is anticipated.

The Asthma Action Plan should be updated at each clinic visit.

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