

'Blue to New' toolkit

Helping patients with Asthma make the switch from blue (salbutamol) inhalers to combination inhalers
(Anti-inflammatory Reliever, or AIR therapy)

01/05/26

The North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) has developed the 'Blue to New' toolkit to support NHS and local authority communications leads, GP practices, and community pharmacies.

Its aims is to help patients with asthma move away from reliance on blue (salbutamol) inhalers towards combination inhalers, either Anti-inflammatory Reliever (AIR) therapy for mild, occasional symptoms or Maintenance and Reliever Therapy (MART) for patients with regular symptoms, in line with national and regional asthma guidelines.

The toolkit provides content aimed at people with Asthma, and parents and carers of children with Asthma and is designed for sharing across NHS partner social media and other communication channels.

Download the online digital toolkit here: [Blue to New toolkit](#)

Background

The move away from relying on blue salbutamol inhalers to using combination inhalers for asthma symptom relief (called Anti-inflammatory Reliever, or AIR therapy) comes from a better understanding of asthma.

Evidence shows that asthma is not just a condition where the airways temporarily tighten. Blue inhalers provide quick relief by relaxing the airway muscles within minutes, but this treatment **ONLY** targets the immediate symptoms and not the cause.



Research has demonstrated that the main underlying problem in asthma is persistent inflammation (swelling) inside the airways, which can be present even when symptoms are mild or not noticeable.

Relying solely on a blue inhaler can hide this ongoing problem with inflammation rather than treat it, allowing the condition to gradually or suddenly worsen and increasing the risk of severe asthma attacks. Four people a day die from serious Asthma attacks, and most Asthma deaths are preventable.

AIR therapy helps solve the problem. These inhalers contain two medicines, one that quickly opens the airways and one that reduces inflammation. Each time the inhaler is used, it not only relieves symptoms but also treats the swelling in the lungs helping to stop asthma from getting worse over time.

Health guidelines, including advice from the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), now recommends this approach with studies showing that people using AIR therapy have fewer serious Asthma attacks and are less likely to need hospital treatment.

Asthma is not just about airways tightening, it is also caused by swelling (inflammation) inside the lungs. Blue inhalers help open the airways for a short time, but they **DO NOT** treat the swelling. AIR therapy treats the cause of asthma, making it safer and more effective in the long term.

Why switch?

- **Improved health outcomes:** Blue inhalers only temporarily open the airways but do not treat the underlying inflammation that causes Asthma attacks. The combination inhalers treat both symptoms and inflammation, reducing the risk of severe attacks and hospital admissions.
- **Environmental impact:** Switching from inhalers that use powerful greenhouse gases as propellants to lower-carbon inhaler types, such as dry powder inhalers, can significantly reduce the NHS's carbon emissions without compromising care quality. Most people find dry powder inhalers easier to use, so the medicine gets into the lungs better.

Aims

- Reduce the risk of serious asthma attacks
- Treat airway inflammation (root cause of asthma)

- Improve day-to-day symptom control
- Reduce overuse of blue salbutamol inhalers
- Simplify treatment with one combined inhaler

Key messages

- Asthma is caused by airway inflammation, not just tight airways
- Blue salbutamol inhalers only relieve symptoms, not the cause
- Overusing blue inhalers can be dangerous
- Combination inhalers treat symptoms and inflammation together
- Using AIR therapy helps prevent asthma attacks and keeps you safer
- Asthma reviews are important - regular reviews help prevent Asthma attacks, improve breathing, and ensure you get the right treatment.

Headline data – NENC Population Profile for Asthma Patients (November 24)

Age 6-19 years who did not receive a review within 18-months

- Approximately **24,600 children and young people across the North East and North Cumbria** have an Asthma diagnosis.
- **33.2% (8,163)** of children with asthma have not received a review within the last 18 months

Highest risk groups

- Children in poorer areas
- Those with anxiety or additional needs
- Young smokers

19+ years who did not receive a review within 18-months

- Approximately **192,500 adults aged over 19 years across the North East and North Cumbria** have an Asthma diagnosis.
- **24.2% (46,621)** adults with Asthma have not received a review within the last 18 months

Highest risk groups:

- Those in poorer areas
- Those with obesity, anxiety, drug misuse, dementia
- Ex smokers

Website copy (for GP practices)

From Blue to New - improving Asthma care

Asthma inhalers, important update

We're asking patients with Asthma to check their treatment. You may be able to upgrade from a blue reliever inhaler to a type called a combination inhaler.

For many years, blue inhalers have been used to quickly help breathing by opening the airways. But we know Asthma is also caused by swelling (inflammation) inside the lungs.

Combination inhalers do two jobs. They:

- Help you breathe more easily
- Reduce swelling in your airways

This can help you feel better, have fewer Asthma attacks, and keep your lungs healthier over time.

What this means for you

If you use a blue inhaler, it may be helpful to have your treatment reviewed. A combination inhaler may help you:

- Control your Asthma better
- Have fewer Asthma attacks
- Need less urgent care
- Breathe more easily day to day

Asthma treatment plans

GP surgeries use different plans depending on your symptoms:

- **AIR (Anti-Inflammatory Reliever)**
For people who only get symptoms sometimes, such as during exercise or allergy season.
- **MART (Maintenance and Reliever Therapy)**
For people with more regular symptoms. This includes daily treatment plus extra help when needed.

What to do next

If you use a blue inhaler, please contact the practice to book an Asthma review.

At your review, a clinician will:

- Check your symptoms
- Make sure you are using your inhaler correctly
- Talk about whether a combination inhaler is right for you

Having the right inhaler and a clear Asthma plan can make a big difference to your health.

For advice or to book a review, please contact the practice.

Social media

Please tag us in your social media posts

Use **#BlueToNew #HereToHelp**

Facebook - NorthEastandNorthCumbriaNHS


X – @NENC_NHS



Instagram – nenc_nhs

TikTok - @nenc_icb




Linked-In - @north-east-and-north-cumbria-nhs




YouTube - North East and North Cumbria NHS

#BlueToNew			
	Facebook/Instagram	X	Visual/video (Visuals for example only)
1.	<p>Using a blue inhaler?</p> <p>There's a better way to manage your Asthma.</p> <p>Your blue inhaler helps quickly but doesn't last long.</p> <p>There are now inhalers that can help keep your Asthma under better control.</p> <p>👉 Book an Asthma review with your GP practice today to find out more.</p> <p>#BlueToNew</p>	<p>Using a blue inhaler?</p> <p>There's a better way to manage your Asthma.</p> <p>👉 Book an Asthma review with your GP practice today.</p> <p>#BlueToNew</p>	

<p>2.</p>	<p>Still using a blue inhaler?</p> <p>What if you could feel better for longer?</p> <p>Your blue inhaler helps you breathe easier but only for about 4 hours!</p> <p>Combination inhalers start working just as fast but last up to 12 hours and help keep your Asthma under better control.</p> <p>♥ Don't wait, book an Asthma review with your GP practice and find out your options.</p> <p>#BlueToNew</p>	<p>Still using a blue inhaler?</p> <p>It's time for an upgrade!</p> <p>Your blue inhaler may offer quick relief but only lasts a few hours.</p> <p>Other inhalers can last up to 12 hours and help control Asthma better.</p> <p>♥ Book a review today with your GP practice to find out more</p> <p>#BlueToNew</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Still using a blue inhaler?</p> <p>It's time for an upgrade!</p> <p>An Asthma review can help you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Find the right inhaler ✓ Breathe better every day ✓ Stop attacks before they start ✓ Stay safe <p>👉 Book a review with your GP practice today!</p> <p>#BlueToNew</p>	<p>Is your inhaler right for you?</p> <p>It's time for an upgrade!</p> <p>An Asthma review can help you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Breathe better ✓ Stay safe ✓ Prevent attacks <p>👉 Contact your GP practice today!</p> <p>#BlueToNew</p>	

<p>4.</p>	<p>Still using a blue inhaler?</p> <p>It's time for an upgrade!</p> <p>Blue inhalers help to open your airways so you can breathe more easily, but Asthma is also caused by swelling inside your lungs.</p> <p>Combination inhalers can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Help you breathe easier ✓ Reduce swelling in your lungs <p>This means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less risk of Asthma attacks • Better daily control • Healthier lungs <p>What should you do?</p> <p>If you use a blue inhaler, it's important to have an Asthma review.</p> <p>An Asthma review will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your symptoms • Make sure you're using your inhaler correctly • See if a combination inhaler is right for you <p>👉 Call your GP practice today to your review.</p> <p>#BlueToNew</p>	<p>Asthma update!</p> <p>If you use a blue inhaler, you would benefit from a combination inhaler that helps breathing and reduces swelling.</p> <p>This means better control and less risk of attacks!</p> <p>👉 Book an Asthma review with your GP practice today to find out more.</p> <p>#BlueToNew</p>	<p>The poster features a teal background with white floral patterns. At the top right is the NHS logo. The main text reads 'Using a blue inhaler?' in large white letters on a dark blue background. Below this, it says 'There's a better way to manage your asthma.' in white. To the right, there are illustrations of various inhalers. At the bottom, a dark blue arrow points right with the text '#BlueToNew' in white, and a smaller white box contains the words 'HERE TO HELP'.</p>
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<h2>#BlueToNew videos</h2> <h3>Dr Nicola Green – respiratory consultant</h3>		
<p>1.</p>	<p>Still using a blue inhaler? There's a better way to manage your asthma. Book an asthma review with your GP practice today. #BluetoNew</p> <p>https://youtu.be/Ef4_oLa_KJk - 25 seconds</p>	
<p>2.</p>	<p>Are you still using a blue inhaler, it's time for an upgrade! Book an asthma review with your GP practice today. #BluetoNew</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtepytKItPo - 19 seconds</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Do you use a blue inhaler for your asthma? What if you could use an inhaler that helped your asthma better, for longer? Book an asthma review with your GP practice today. #BluetoNew</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtvEXZ18Nxx - 23 seconds</p>	

<p>4.</p>	<p>Are you still using a blue inhaler, it's time for an upgrade! Book an asthma review with your GP practice today. #BluetoNew https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xM5jmQ3cAIQ - 38 seconds</p>	 <p>Dr Nicola Green Respiratory consultant It's time for an upgrade.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Still using a blue inhaler, it's time for an upgrade! Find out how booking an asthma review with your GP practice could help you. #BluetoNew https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSsb0YPGJMA - 22 seconds</p>	 <p>Still using a blue inhaler? It's time for an upgrade!</p>	
<p>Ciaran Foster – senior clinical pharmacist</p>			
<p>1.</p>	<p>Did you know there's a better way to manage your asthma? Book an asthma review with your GP practice today. #BluetoNew https://youtu.be/HznP0Trk3dc - 17 seconds</p>	 <p>Ciaran Foster Senior clinical pharmacist Did you know there's a better way to manage your asthma?</p>	

<p>2.</p>	<p>Do you use a blue inhaler for your asthma? What if you could use an inhaler that helped your asthma better, for longer? Book an asthma review with your GP practice today. #BluetoNew https://youtu.be/vQg3kJMj-1M - 23 seconds</p>		
<p>3.</p>	<p>Are you still using a blue inhaler, it's time for an upgrade! Book an asthma review with your GP practice today. #BluetoNew https://youtu.be/rHStMCXLZA4 - 36 seconds</p>		
<p>4.</p>	<p>Still using a blue inhaler, its time for an upgrade Find out how booking an asthma review with your GP practice could help you. #BluetoNew https://youtu.be/q7vbG-uz1YQ - 18 seconds</p>		

<h2>SMS text messaging for GP Practices</h2>	
<p>1</p>	<p>Still using a blue inhaler? It's time for an upgrade! Your blue inhaler is not the best option. An Asthma review could help find the right treatment for you and improve your breathing. Please contact us to book an appointment.</p>

Additional assets	
Posters / GP waiting room screens	

Press release

From blue to new! Patients offered upgrade in Asthma care

Ahead of World Asthma Day (5 May) people across the North East and North Cumbria, are being encouraged to upgrade their inhalers from 'blue to new' as part of a major step forward in lung-health care.

The familiar blue reliever treatment, which has been used by millions of asthma patients for over five decades, is being upgraded to a new and improved anti-inflammatory reliever (combination) inhaler which not only relieves symptoms of Asthma but also treats the underlying cause.

Alongside opening the airways, the combination inhaler also reduces swelling (inflammation) in the lungs, making Asthma symptoms easier to manage.

Professor Ewan Maule, director of medicines and pharmacy, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB), said: "For over 50 years, the blue inhaler has been prescribed for people with Asthma, providing quick relief for breathing difficulties.

"We now know that Asthma is not just about keeping the airways open, it's also about controlling the inflammation, or swelling, that causes the symptoms in the first place.

"By upgrading to a combined treatment inhaler, patients not only get the relief they need but also benefit from treatment that treats the root cause of their Asthma.

"This can lead to fewer flare-ups, fewer hospital visits, and better long-term lung health."

Claire Adams, ICB respiratory clinical lead, said the move from 'blue to new' was an important change that would help many people across the region, with Asthma, live better lives.

"We know that change can feel scary, especially when people have relied on their blue inhaler for years," she said.

"This change in guidance is an important opportunity to make a real difference to how Asthma is managed.

"Combination inhalers offer more protection and better control, helping people to live well and breathe more easily."

Anyone currently using a blue reliever treatment inhaler is being encouraged to contact their GP practice to review their Asthma plan to see if a combination inhaler might work better for them.

GP practices provide two main treatment plans for Asthma:

- **Anti-Inflammatory reliever (AIR)** - for people who only experience Asthma symptoms less than twice a month, during certain times of the year, such as pollen season, when around pets, or during exercise.
- **Maintenance and reliever therapy (MART) plan**, for people who have Asthma symptoms more regularly.

"Having the right plan and using the right inhaler, in the right way, can make all the difference in managing Asthma effectively," added Claire.

"Reviewing your Asthma action plan with a healthcare professional will ensure you understand how to use the right inhaler correctly and get the best protection for your lungs, helping you to live symptom free!"

For more information and support on switching from 'Blue to New', contact your GP surgery.

Ends - for further information contact Andrea Jones, communications campaign lead, andrea.jones2@nhs.net