

PRESCRIBING



February
2024

Updated APC Asthma Guidance for Adults

The Coventry and Warwickshire Area Prescribing Committee "Asthma Prescribing Guidelines for Adults (Chronic Asthma)" [CG021] have recently been reviewed and updated.

Points to note:

- Management emphasises checking inhaler technique and adherence at every opportunity and ensuring use of Personalised Asthma Action Plans (PAAPs) to ensure appropriate individual patient education and review.
- The management flowchart has been modified to provide clarity on the differences between NICE and SIGN/BTS asthma guidelines. This includes the need to review treatment every 3 months and, if needed, step up immediately to the level appropriate to the asthma severity and step down to maintain at the lowest controlling level.
- The third page of the document categorises APC preferred formulary inhaler choices in tabular form, according to each level of the asthma management flowchart. These inhaler options are arranged in order of carbon footprint to facilitate the review to low carbon footprint devices e.g. Dry Powder Inhalers, **where these are clinically appropriate for the patient**. Brand, generic name, dose and frequency, and Drug Tariff inhaler costs are also stated in the table.
- Sub-optimal technique is widespread and is linked to poor clinical control of asthma. Patients prescribed the same class of device (i.e. Dry Powder Inhalers or aerosols) are significantly more likely to achieve asthma control than those prescribed mixed devices.**

Did You Know?.....

- All practices signed up to the 2023/24 prescribing incentive scheme will need to have a meeting with their Medicines Optimisation pharmacist before the end of March to discuss progress with their 3 chosen focus areas.
- Knee pressure offloading devices have been designated Specialist Only by the [Coventry and Warwickshire APC](#). The device should be supplied by a specialist or at a secondary care clinic and fitted by a trained orthotist or physiotherapist or other specialist healthcare professional.
- [Valproate containing products can now only be dispensed in the manufacturers' original full pack](#) as it includes specific warnings and pictograms, including a patient card and patient information leaflet. These alert patients to the risks to unborn babies if valproate is used in pregnancy.

Amoxicillin Use in Coventry and Warwickshire ICB – Focus on Course length.

A [recent message](#) from the UK Health Security Agency highlighted that antibiotic resistant infections are on the rise again after declines in the pandemic, when antibiotic use in general, also declined.

Action Points:

- Where antibiotic prescribing is necessary, 5 day prescribing is encouraged (taking into account local and national guidelines (some exceptions)).
- [The Coventry and Warwickshire Community Antibiotic Guidelines](#) state that treatment for infective exacerbation of COPD and Community Acquired Pneumonia is amoxicillin 500mg three times a day initially for **5 days only**.

NHS regional primary care antimicrobial prescribing data accessed from NHSBSA ePACT2 analysis shows that:

- Coventry and Warwickshire** as a whole (assuming the majority of the courses prescribed are for respiratory infections) has a **higher proportion of 7-day course lengths compared to 5-day courses**.
- When compared to other ICBs in the Midlands region, Coventry and Warwickshire ICB has a greater number of 7 day courses.

In addition, one of the [National Medicines Optimisation Opportunities for 2023/24](#) is to reduce course length of antimicrobial prescribing. Inappropriate and excessive antibiotic use increases the risk of emergence of antibiotic resistant bacteria. Shorter courses also reduce the risk of inadvertent patient harm from antibiotic treatment.

Specifically, the guidance states the following example of success ...

- By March 2024, 75% or more of total amoxicillin prescriptions as 5-day courses.
- Coventry and Warwickshire are prescribing ~ 35 % of 5-day amoxicillin courses.