

**Clinical Commissioning Group**

Be Greener and Breathe Better



A Patients Guide to Green Inhalers

**Going 'Greener'**

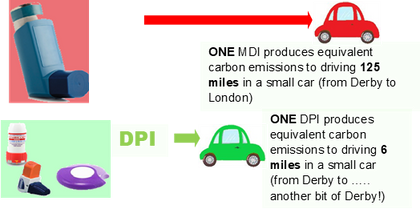
Everyone is talking about 'going greener', 'reducing my carbon footprint' and 'harmful carbon dioxide'. But what does this mean for me and my health? How can I make a difference and make sure that I stay well?

**Our Carbon Footprint**

The amount of greenhouse gases released by a place or person is known as its 'carbon footprint'. The NHS is responsible for 5% of the UK's total carbon footprint. To help combat climate change, the NHS has made a commitment to reduce its carbon footprint to net zero by 2040.

**How are inhalers linked to climate change?**

In England, more than 65 million inhalers are prescribed every year, and about 70% of these are pressurized metered dose inhalers (MDIs). **MDIs have a much higher carbon footprint than other types of inhalers, such as Dry Powder Inhalers (DPIs) and Soft Mist Inhalers (SMIs)** This is because MDIs contain propellants which are very strong greenhouse gases, thousands of times more powerful than carbon dioxide. Inhalers contribute 3-4% of the entire NHS carbon footprint. DPIs and SMIs have a much lower carbon footprint and will be suitable and work well for most patients.



**What can I do to help?**

Make sure your breathing is as good as it can be by:

* Keep up to date with any recommended vaccinations such as COVID-19, Flu and Pneumonia.
* If you smoke, try to stop – ask your GP or nurse about smoking cessation services. Attend your GP practice for your asthma or COPD reviews when invited.
* Whilst having your review ask your healthcare team to check how you are using your inhaler.
* If you have asthma contact your GP practice if you are needing to use your reliever (blue) inhaler three times or more each week.
* If you are using an MDI it is most effective if used with a spacer. Your spacer should be replaced every year.
* A spacer should also be hand washed once a week and left to air dry – **not dried with a tea towel.** For further information about your spacer see the Asthma+Lung UK website: https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhalersmedicines-treatments/inhalers-and-spacers/spacers/
* After using a steroid inhaler, it is important to rinse your mouth (then spit out the water) or brush your teeth. This will help stop your mouth becoming sore.
* Reduce waste - don't order more inhalers than you need

**Should I switch to a Dry Powder (DPI) or Soft Mist Inhaler (SMI)?**

**The 'greenest' inhaler is the one that you can use easily and correctly, and which controls your asthma or COPD well. DPIs aren't suitable for everyone.**

If you do need an inhaler containing greenhouse gases, please do not feel guilty. If you need an MDI, it may still be possible to switch to an inhaler with a lower carbon footprint – please ask your GP, nurse, or pharmacist for advice.

**But many patients may find a DPI is easier to use:**

* DPIs do not rely on hydrofluorocarbon propellants to spray medication into your lungs; therefore, their carbon footprint is typically 20 times lower than an MDI (a huge reduction!)
* DPIs require less co-ordination, and may be easier to use, as the dose can be prepared before breathing in through the inhaler.
* DPIs all come with a dose counter, so you know when to reorder
* **DPI's are NOT suitable if you have an allergy/anaphylaxis to lactose (or milk protein)**

**What is the best way to dispose of an empty inhaler?**

**Do not throw used or unwanted inhalers in the bin. Return them to the pharmacy.** Pharmacies can send inhalers for incineration or recycling, both of which are better than sending them for landfill. Don’t put your inhaler in kerb side recycling as it **won’t** be recycled. If all used inhalers in the UK were returned for safe disposal, this could save 512,330 tonnes of CO2eq annually - **the same as a VW Golf car being driven around the world 88,606 times!**

**Talk to your practice nurse, doctor or pharmacist for more information.** *BGBB V3. Issued May 2022 Review by May 2025*