Salbutamol inhalers from your Pharmacist

If you already use asthma inhalers, your Pharmacist may be able to renew your supply without a prescription. This could prevent you from running out.

The service does not replace your doctor’s surgery. Breathing problems, including asthma, are usually treated by doctors and nurses. Regular check-ups are required every year, or sometimes more frequently. If your Pharmacist supplies you with an occasional inhaler, you still need to have your regular surgery check-ups with a doctor or nurse.

If your Pharmacist cannot supply an inhaler, you should obtain it through your surgery in the normal way. Pharmacists are restricted in which inhalers they can supply. Some inhalers are available only on prescription. Pharmacists cannot supply steroid inhalers for breathing problems.

If your Pharmacist cannot supply your inhalers, it does NOT mean you do not need one. Your Pharmacist can supply only one inhaler per month and only six inhalers over a year.

Which inhaler

Pharmacists supply only inhalers containing the active ingredient called salbutamol.

This includes the brands: Ventolin Evohaler®, Ventolin Accuhaler® (dry powder for inhalation), Salamol Easi-Breathe®, Airomir Autohaler®, Airomir Aerosol inhalation®, Amsal Clickhaler® (dry powder for inhalation), Salbutin Novolizer® (dry powder for inhalation), salbutamol (non-proprietary) aerosol inhalation—includes Salamol® and Salbumalin®; salbutamol (non-proprietary) dry powder for inhalation—includes Easihaler® Salbutamol, and Pulvinal® Salbutamol.

All these brands of inhaler contain the same active ingredient called salbutamol. If you are not sure which brand of inhaler you use, your Pharmacist will advise you.

Obtaining an inhaler from your Pharmacist without a prescription is a private service, not paid for by the NHS. Your pharmacy will charge a fee, which will vary depending on the brand of inhaler you use.

Inhalers from Pharmacists

Inhalers from Pharmacists are not suitable for everyone. You will be asked to complete a short questionnaire before an inhaler can be supplied. A copy of the questionnaire will be sent to your surgery to keep your doctor and nurse informed.

You are advised to have an early check-up with a nurse or doctor if:

- You need to use your salbutamol inhaler more than a 2 or 3 times a week.
- You are having ongoing breathing symptoms such as a cough at night, uncontrolled shortness of breath, or worsening breathing symptoms.

You should seek urgent medical help if:

- You need to use your salbutamol more than 4 times daily.
- Your inhaler relieves symptoms for less than 3 hours.
- Your breathing is getting worse, despite using treatment.
- You get chest pains or increasing tightness in the chest after using your inhaler.

Asthma and breathing problems treatment

Your Pharmacist CANNOT oversee all your chest treatment. Only your doctor or nurse can deal with all your asthma/breathing needs.

Breathing problems may be mild, moderate or severe, and can be present all the time or intermittently.

Mild occasional symptoms are usually treated with salbutamol inhalers (relievers). More severe symptoms require the addition of inhalers containing steroids (preventers). Steroid inhalers reduce inflammation in the lungs. The dose of inhaled steroids can be increased if needed. Some people only need to use steroids from time to time when their breathing problems flare up.

If salbutamol inhalers and steroid inhalers together are not enough, there are other inhalers and medicines which can be added. These include prednisolone tablets and long acting reliever inhalers.

Further information

Information about asthma from the NHS Choices website and about chronic respiratory disease (COPD or chronic bronchitis – usually smoking related).

www.nhs.uk/conditions/asthma
www.nhs.uk/conditions/Chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease