

Inhalers – How could you help the Environment?

Some inhalers are greener than others

Some inhalers contain propellants, known as hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). HFCs do not have an effect on the ozone layer. However, they are powerful greenhouse gases and can contribute to global warming. This is referred to as their carbon footprint, measured in carbon dioxide equivalents (g CO₂eq). The bigger the carbon dioxide equivalent, the bigger the impact on global warming. Please be assured these gases are not harmful to you when you use your inhaler.

These inhalers are known as pressurised metered dose inhalers or pMDI's. You might know them as spray or pump inhalers. Breath actuated inhalers such as Easi-breathe[®] also contain the propellants and can contribute to global warming.

Dry powder inhalers for example Ellipta[®], Turbohaler[®], Breezehaler[®], NEXThaler[®] and Easyhaler[®] do not contain propellants. This means they have a lower carbon footprint than the other inhalers.

Do you use a blue inhaler?

If you have a blue “reliever” inhaler which contains salbutamol this is likely to be one of the inhalers that contains propellants.

In Barnsley we have decided to prescribe all blue “spray” salbutamol inhalers as the brand Salamol[®] which has a lower carbon footprint.

It has a lower carbon footprint because the Salamol[®] canister is smaller than Ventolin[®] so it contains less propellant. You still get the same number of doses.

Your prescription for Salbutamol or Ventolin[®] inhaler may change to Salamol[®].

Although the inhaler may look and feel slightly different with a softer spray, Salamol[®] contains the same medicine*, salbutamol, and works in the same way as Ventolin[®]

**Although the active ingredient is the same, the inhalers use different substances to help the medicine keep stable and work. The information leaflet that comes with the inhaler provides details.*

Carbon footprint of Salamol and Ventolin[®] compared to car journeys

Salamol salbutamol inhaler



1 inhaler =



40 miles

Ventolin salbutamol inhaler



1 inhaler =



93 miles

2021 data for a medium petrol car gov.co.uk

What else can I do to help the environment?

If you have asthma and are using more than 2 blue inhalers in a year this may suggest your condition is not well controlled. Please speak to your GP practice to book a review

- Use all the doses in your inhaler up – don't discard inhalers with doses left in. If your inhaler does not have a dose counter, you may want to keep a record of the doses you have used. Free counter apps are available on iOS and android.
- **Return used inhalers to the pharmacy to dispose of in an environmentally safe way.** Inhalers will be sent for incineration which destroys the remaining greenhouse gases.
- Speak to your health care professional who can review your existing inhalers and suggest even **more environmentally friendly options like dry powder inhalers** which may be suitable for you.
- Always use your inhalers as prescribed. If you are concerned about the effect your inhalers have on the environment, please do not stop using your inhalers as it is important to make sure your condition remains controlled. Please be assured that the contents of your inhalers are safe for you to use.