

Guidance on the use of emergency salbutamol inhalers in schools

From 1st October 2014 the Human Medicines Regulations 2014 allowed schools to buy salbutamol inhalers, without a prescription, for use in emergencies.

The emergency salbutamol inhaler should only be used by children, for whom written parental consent for use of the emergency inhaler has been given, who have either been diagnosed with asthma and prescribed an inhaler, or who have been prescribed an inhaler as reliever medication.

How can schools obtain salbutamol inhalers & spacer devices?

Spacer devices are not prescription only medicines (POM) so these can be bought as a retail transaction. However salbutamol inhalers, which are POMs, will need to be purchased via a signed written order. The pharmacy will charge the school for the inhalers in line with MHRA guidance which is on a not for profit basis provided that the school is requesting the inhalers in small quantities, on an occasional basis and not for profit.

Who can provide a signed order for salbutamol inhalers for a school?

A written order signed by the principal or head teacher at the school must be provided to enable a supply to be made to the school.

What information should be contained in the signed order?

In line with legislation requirements; the order must be signed by the principal or head teacher at the school concerned and state

- *The name of the school for which the medicinal product is required,*
- *The purpose for which that product is required, and*
- *The total quantity required"*

Ideally appropriately headed paper should be used however this is not a legislative requirement.

How many inhalers can a school obtain?

The number of inhalers that can be obtained by individual schools is not specified in legislation. As part of the consultation process it was acknowledged that the number held for emergency use would be dependent on a variety of factors including; the school size and the number of sites it is comprised of, the number of children known to have asthma, and past experiences of children who had not been able to access their inhaler. It was however agreed, generally that only a small number of inhalers were likely to be needed annually. Schools can purchase salbutamol inhalers from pharmacies provided it is for small quantities, on an occasional basis and not for profit thus in line with [MHRA Guidance for pharmacists on the repeal of Section 10\(7\) of the Medicines Act 1968](#)

The pharmacist could also be asked to:

- Explain how to use a salbutamol inhaler and any associated information
- Advise schools on the selection of the most appropriate spacer device for the different age groups and how to use them correctly.

Hygiene

- **To avoid possible risk of cross-infection, the plastic spacer should not be reused. It can be given to the child to take home for future personal use**
- The inhaler itself however can usually be reused, provided it is cleaned after use. The inhaler canister should be removed, and the plastic inhaler housing and cap should be washed in warm running water, and left to dry in air in a clean, safe place
- The canister should be returned to the housing when it is dry, and the cap replaced, and the inhaler returned to the designated storage place.
- **However, if there is any risk of contamination with blood (for example if the inhaler has been used without a spacer), it should also not be re-used but disposed of**

Storage

A school's asthma policy should include staff responsibilities for maintaining the emergency inhaler kit. The inhaler should be stored at the appropriate temperature (in line with manufacturer's guidelines), usually below 30C, protected from direct sunlight and extremes of temperature. It is recommended that at least two named volunteers amongst school staff should have responsibility for ensuring that:

- On a monthly basis the inhaler and spacers are present and in working order, and the inhaler has sufficient number of doses available
- That replacement inhalers are obtained when expiry dates approach
- Replacement spacers are available following use
- The plastic inhaler housing (which holds the canister) has been cleaned, dried and returned to storage following use, or that replacements are available if necessary

Additional Information

ROYAL PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY- SUPPLY OF SALBUTAMOL INHALERS TO SCHOOLS

DOH – GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF EMERGENCY SALBUTAMOL INHALERS IN SCHOOLS