Inhaler carbon footprint CO_2

NHS
Suffolk and North East Essex
Integrated Care Board

Why choose a more environmentally friendly inhaler?

You use a metered dose inhaler (MDI) for your lung condition. These are the most common type of inhaler used in the UK. MDIs contain a gas (propellant) in a metal canister that you press down into a plastic case to release the medicine into your lungs. Inhalers are a vital part of your treatment. It's really important that you continue to take your inhalers as prescribed, to keep your lungs healthy.

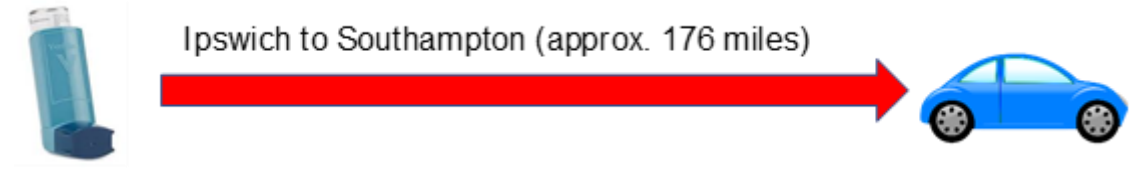
The gas in your current inhaler is a powerful greenhouse gas. This means that when the gas is released, it stays in the air and traps the sun's heat, like glass in a greenhouse. This warms the planet which is a problem for the climate. Climate change increases air pollution which can worsen lung conditions.

Surveys have shown that most patients with inhalers want to try to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from their inhalers. There are many ways to achieve this, including changing the way you use and dispose of your inhalers, or switching to a different more environmentally friendly inhaler.

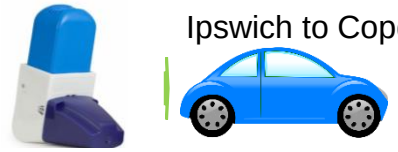
The NHS supports the change to environmentally friendly inhalers if this is the right choice for you. NHS research has shown that people are willing to change to environmentally friendly inhalers.

Environmentally friendly inhalers which do not contain a greenhouse gas are dry powder inhalers (DPI) or soft mist inhalers (SMIs). Not all patients can use these sorts of inhalers, although many patients find them easier to use. They all come with dose counters, making it easier to keep a track of your medicines. With DPIs you don't need to co-ordinate pressing and breathing in at the same time. Some DPIs have the benefit of being once-daily inhalers that work for 24 hours.

Equivalent tailpipe greenhouse gas emissions from one inhaler*



Ventolin Evohaler (MDI)



Easyhaler Salbutamol (DPI)

Adapted by Suffolk and North East Essex Medicines Optimisation Teams from leaflet produced by PrescQIPP June 2022. Approved by IMOC October 2022. Review September 2024

Some MDIs contain a smaller amount of greenhouse gas than other MDIs, making them more environmentally friendly.

Some MDIs contain a powerful greenhouse gas. Other MDIs contain a less powerful greenhouse gas and so are more environmentally friendly.

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if there is an environmentally friendly inhaler which might be right for you.

Even if your MDI has a high carbon footprint and you are concerned about climate change, it is very important that you continue to use your inhaler to keep your lungs healthy.

There are additional ways you can help yourself and the environment when using inhalers:

- Make sure you use your preventer (treatment) inhaler every day, as this should lessen how much you need to use your reliever inhaler. Look at your inhaler dose counter, if it has one, or think about ways to help you remember to use your inhaler.
- Check that you are using your MDI correctly so that you get all the benefits from using your inhaler. You can read a leaflet or watch a video on how to use your inhaler (www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos/)
- Follow your asthma action plan, or self management plan for COPD, which tells you what to do when your symptoms are getting worse.
- Most inhalers are disposed of before all the doses have been used up. If your inhaler has a dose counter, use that to see when it is empty. If not, make sure you know how many doses your inhaler has when it's new to help you keep track.
- Return your empty or unwanted inhalers to a community pharmacy or dispensary for environmentally safe disposal or recycling. Did you know that inhalers, like other medicines, should not be put in your household waste bin or recycling bin? Even when your metered dose inhaler is empty, it still contains some of the greenhouse gas.

*One Ventolin Evohaler contains 28kgCO_2e, one Easyhaler Salbutamol contains 0.6kgCO_2e. Assumes car achieves 100gCO2/km (small car) or 100g CO2/0.6214mile. Approximate distance quoted.

https://greeninhaler.org/ Accessed 09.09.2022
PrescQIPP Inhaler Comparisons including indicative carbon footprint October 2020 Hot topic Lowering the inhaler carbon footprint | PrescQIPP C.I.C Accessed 10.06.2022

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