

Medicines Management FAQs – COVID19

Should I prescribe COPD/Asthma rescue packs during COVID19 outbreak?

We have had a number of enquiries from practices regarding prescribing of emergency exacerbation packs. We are also aware of significant messages circulated on social media regarding this.

Please note that significantly altering prescribing behaviour goes against current NHSE guidance on not disrupting the supply chain by changing prescribing behaviour.

There is no indication to change prescribing strategies around rescue packs - current national guidance to support COVID-19 does NOT support prescribing of 'just in case' antibiotics or care homes holding 'stock' of rescue packs in case of suspected COVID 19. There are very clear primary care guidelines that require all prescribers to not currently change prescribing habits. No alteration in duration, quantity or advanced rescue prescribing should take place as this seriously compromises the medicines supply chain and equitable access. We would ask for your continued support on this matter as we work collaboratively to identify the best way to support early use of antibiotics. If information changes we will inform and update you.

Asthma: If patients have worsening asthma they should not be provided with rescue packs without review. Instead, they need to seek medical assistance as per their asthma action plan ie Moderate asthma: ask for GP appointment (which would be triaged on phone re covid19 first)

Acute severe asthma: patient would need 999 call. It is acceptable to issue rescue packs for patients who are currently stable and just need them on standby provided this is covered by their usual asthma management plan.

COPD: Patients who may be having an exacerbation should not have rescue packs given/reissued without the clinician having a very explicit conversation with the patient distinguishing between symptoms of COVID19 (for which a rescue pack could actually cause harm) vs symptoms of COPD exacerbation (which of course would be appropriate). It is acceptable to issue rescue packs for patients who are currently stable and just need them on standby provided this covered by their usual COPD management plan.

The British Thoracic Society (BTS) have compiled guidance around community respiratory services in relation to COVID19:

<https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/about-us/covid-19-information-for-the-respiratory-community/>

Please also remember to signpost patients to Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation as both organisations have sound advice for staying well with disease but also are in line with government COVID19 advice.

See [COVID-19 rapid guideline: severe asthma](#) for further guidance on asthma management

See [COVID-19 rapid guideline: community-based care of patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease \(COPD\)](#) for further guidance on COPD management