

Be Greener and Breathe Better

A Patients Guide to Green Inhalers



**HEALTHIER
 PLANET
 HEALTHIER
 PEOPLE**

Going 'Greener'

Everyone is talking about 'going greener', 'reducing my carbon footprint' and 'harmful carbon dioxide'. But what does this mean for me and my health? How can I make a difference and make sure that I stay well?

Our Carbon Footprint

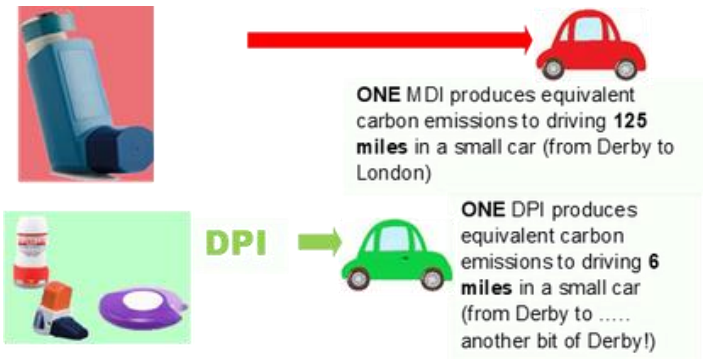
The amount of greenhouse gases released by a place or person is known as its 'carbon footprint'.

The NHS is responsible for 5% of the UK's total carbon footprint. To help combat climate change, the NHS has made a commitment to reduce its carbon footprint to net zero by 2040.

How are inhalers linked to climate change?

In England, more than 65 million inhalers are prescribed every year, and about 70% of these are pressurised metered dose inhalers (or 'pMDIs'). **This type of inhaler has a much higher carbon footprint than other types of inhalers, such as Dry Powder Inhalers (DPIs) and Soft Mist Inhalers (SMIs).**

This is because some pressurised metered dose inhalers contain propellants which are very strong greenhouse gases, much more powerful than carbon dioxide and are not good for our environment. Dry Powder and Soft Mist inhalers are much better for our environment.



What can I do to help?

Make sure your breathing is as good as it can be by:

- Keep up to date with any recommended vaccinations such as COVID-19, Flu and Pneumonia
- If you smoke, try to stop – ask your GP or nurse about how we can help you to stop
- Attend your GP practice for your asthma or COPD reviews when invited
- Whilst having your review ask your healthcare team to check how you are using your inhaler
- If you have asthma contact your GP practice if you are needing to use your reliever (blue) inhaler more than three times a week
- If you are using a gas propellant inhaler it is most effective if used with a spacer device
- Your spacer should be replaced every year. A spacer should also be hand washed once a week and left to air dry – not dried with a tea towel
- **For further information about inhalers and spacers see the Asthma and Lung UK website:**
[https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhalers- medicines- treatments/inhalers-and-spacers/spacers/](https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhalers-medicines-treatments/inhalers-and-spacers/spacers/) or speak to your practice asthma nurse
- Reduce waste - don't order more inhalers than you need

Be aware that lower carbon gas propellant inhalers are lighter and may taste sweeter and feel different when used. When used correctly, they work just as well. The inhalers must be shaken well before **each** use and the plastic case cleaned **weekly**.

Please do not stop using your inhaler(s) without medical advice.

Should I switch to a Lower Carbon, Dry Powder (DPI) or Soft Mist Inhaler (SMI)?

As explained earlier, the Dry Powder and Soft Mist inhalers are better for the environment. However, we know they're not suitable for everyone, but we would like to encourage you to try one of these inhalers. If you try one and find they don't work for you, please speak to your asthma nurse or practice pharmacist for advice as it may still be possible to switch to an inhaler with a lower carbon footprint.

Things for your consideration: Many patients find a Dry Powder Inhaler is easier to use:

- Dry Powder Inhalers do not use any gas to spray medication into your lungs; therefore, their carbon footprint is typically 20 times lower than a gas propellant inhaler (a huge reduction!)
- Dry Powder Inhalers require less co-ordination, and may be easier to use, as the dose can be prepared before breathing in through the inhaler
- Dry Powder Inhalers all come with a dose counter, so you know when it's time to reorder
- **Dry Powder Inhalers are NOT suitable if you have a severe allergy/anaphylaxis to lactose (or milk protein).**

How do I dispose of my inhalers?

Do not throw used or unwanted inhalers in the bin. Return them to the pharmacy

- Pharmacies can send inhalers for safe disposal which is better than sending them for landfill
- Don't put your inhaler in household recycling as it won't be recycled

Did you know that if all used inhalers in the UK were returned for safe disposal, this could save 512,330 tonnes of CO₂eq annually - **the same as a VW Golf car being driven around the world 88,606 times!**

Talk to your practice nurse, doctor or pharmacist for more information.