

To: All Community Pharmacies

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Dear Colleague

NATIONAL PATIENT SAFETY ALERT (NPSA) – RESOURCES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE FOR PATIENTS DISPENSED CORTICOSTEROID MEDICATION

The [NPSA safety alert \(13th August 2020\)](#) highlights the dangers associated with adrenal insufficiency for patients taking corticosteroid medication. The alert recommends all eligible patients prescribed (or initiated on) steroids have been assessed, and where necessary issued a **Steroid Emergency Card** as outlined in the [Guidance for the prevention and emergency management of adult patients with adrenal insufficiency](#).

As outlined in our recent [letter](#), the PHA and HSCB are in the process of developing a **Steroid Emergency Card for Northern Ireland**; we will provide further details on this in due course. In the interim, I would like to highlight the resources currently available for patients being prescribed / dispensed high dose corticosteroids:

- Steroid Treatment Card (Blue Card)
- High Dose Inhaled Steroid Card – see **Appendix 1**
- High Dose Inhaled Steroid A5 Information Leaflet (tear off pad)

Community pharmacies may wish to use the current resources (until a new **Steroid Emergency Card** for Northern Ireland is available). The resources are available to order from BSO Stationery. Orders should be placed by emailing: pharmacystationeryorders@hscni.net

A full list of patients who should be considered to be at risk of adrenal crisis can be found at [Guidance for the prevention and emergency management of adult patients with adrenal insufficiency](#) and includes:

- Patients taking prednisolone 5 mg/day or equivalent for 4 weeks or longer across all routes of administration (oral, topical, inhaled or intranasal)

- Patients taking more than 40 mg prednisolone or equivalent for longer than 1 week or repeated courses of short oral doses
- Patients taking a course of oral glucocorticoid within 1 year of stopping long-term therapy
- Patients taking inhaled beclometasone >1000 mcg/ day or fluticasone >500 mcg/day are at risk of adrenal insufficiency due to hypothalamo-pituitary axis suppression.

*A summary of the commonly prescribed ICS/LABA combination inhalers and their beclometasone equivalence is provided in **Appendix 2**.*

If you have any queries, please contact your local HSCB Pharmacy Adviser.

Yours sincerely,



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Encs.

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Appendix 1: High Dose Inhaled Steroid Card

High Dose Inhaled Corticosteroid Safety Card

Name: _____ DOB: _____

I take: _____ Strength: _____

MDI + Spacer / Accuhaler / Turbohaler / _____

At a dose of: _____ puffs _____ time(s) a day

I may be at risk of corticosteroid insufficiency when I am ill and supplementation should be considered.

Prescriber: _____ Date: _____


OS28286

You have been given this safety card because you are taking a high dose of inhaled corticosteroid.

It is important that you do NOT stop using your inhaled corticosteroid suddenly, particularly if you have been taking this medication for more than 3 weeks.

Be sure to get your repeat prescription of your inhaler before it runs out.

Always carry this card with you and show it to your medical team if you become ill.



Appendix 2: ICS/LABA combination inhalers and their Beclometasone Equivalence

ICS/LABA Inhaler & strength	Strength	Dose	Beclometasone Equivalence/24hrs (Non-Extra Fine)
Patients may be taking > 1000mcg beclometasone equivalence/day – check dose			
Fostair (Beclomet Diprop/Formoterol)	100/6	2 inh bd	1000 mcg
Seretide Evohaler (Fluticasone/Salmeterol)	125/25	2 inh bd	1000 mcg
Seretide Accuhaler (Fluticasone/Salmeterol Inh)	250/50	1 inh bd	1000 mcg
Patients likely to be taking > 1000mcg beclometasone equivalence/day			
DuoResp Spiromax (Budesonide/Formoterol)	320/9	2 inh bd	1600 mcg
Symbicort Turbohaler (Budesonide/Formoterol)	400/12	2 inh bd	1600 mcg
Fostair (Beclomet Diprop/Formoterol)	200/6	2 inh bd	2000 mcg
Flutiform (Fluticasone/Formoterol)	250/10	2 inh bd	2000mcg
Seretide Evohaler (Fluticasone/Salmeterol)	250/25	2 inh bd	2000mcg
Seretide Accuhaler (Fluticasone/Salmeterol)	500/50	1 inh bd	2000mcg
Relvar Ellipta (Fluticasone/Vilanterol)	184/22	1 inh od	2000mcg*