

# Pharmacists: Leaders in Asthma Education

## Pharmacists are Respected in their Community

The world of medicine is always changing. With this constant change, it is increasingly important that pharmacists offer to counsel patients on how to use their medication and how to improve their asthma outcomes. Some ways to do this include:

- Note excessive use of Albuterol inhalers and contact the Primary Care Provider.
- Encourage the patient to quit smoking. Refer to Vermont's 802Quits. Free NRT and counseling are available 24/7 at: 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).
- Instruct when to use rescue inhaler versus control inhaler.
- Assist patients in getting flu and pneumonia vaccination. Some patients are unaware that getting the flu or any respiratory infection can be a serious trigger for their asthma.



## The Importance of an Asthma Action Plan (AAP)

Encourage patients to bring in their Asthma Action Plan that is created with their physician. The AAP is an important tool for improving asthma outcomes. It often uses colors and images to ensure patient understanding including tips for:

- Knowing the differences between mild and severe asthma symptoms.
- Being reminded on ways to reduce common triggers.
- Keeping a schedule for gaining and maintaining asthma control.
- Assessing when asthma symptoms demand medical attention.



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## Demonstrate Inhaler and Spacer Use



Teaching patients, and parents, how to orient, release and inhale multi dose inhalers with or without spacers as appropriate is of the highest educational priority. The medication will not work if sprayed onto the tongue or back of throat.

- Most common errors with inhalers include improper priming, breathing timing of drug release and of holding breath appropriately.

- Patients on Medicaid are eligible for multiple spacers.

- Not all people with asthma understand the “big picture” of their disease state. To some it is just an inconvenience. However, as pharmacists we know the severity of asthma including risk of mortality. Our goal is to inform and educate according to the patients’ needs.

### For more information:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/default.htm>

National Jewish Health:

<https://www.nationaljewish.org/treatment-programs/directory/asthma-treatment-adult>

The Mayo Clinic:

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/asthma/basics/definition/con-20026992>

## Communicate with the Patient and their Primary Care Physician

The pharmacist is one of the most commonly visited medical professionals. For providers and pharmacists to be in contact with each other is an important part of ensuring the best care for the patient.

- Always make sure to review treatment therapies with the patient’s profiles to prevent extra expenses, ensure appropriate therapy for their severity or complicated therapies.

- If possible, try to keep the patient on similar types of inhalers to support patient safety and compliance.

- Consider contacting the Primary Care Physician when there is a formulary change and an appropriate asthma medicine may be available at a lower cost.

### For financial concerns:

- ◆ Medicaid patients are eligible to receive a spacer in addition to their inhaler, with no limit on the number of spacers. For other insurance carriers, it is helpful to check on spacer cost and encourage patient use for compatible inhalers.
- ◆ For patients who struggle with co-pays, explore the possibility of using drug manufacturer coupons or other online programs such as: GoodRx, NeedyMeds, RxAssist, or RxHope.

For more resources and data in Vermont, visit:

### The Vermont Asthma Program:

<http://www.healthvermont.gov/wellness/asthma>