

NHS Lothian Guidance on AIR and MART in Asthma

AIR (Anti-inflammatory reliever) and MART (Maintenance and reliever therapy) are a combination of similar medicines, an inhaled corticosteroid with formoterol. The difference between AIR and MART is how each inhaler product is prescribed.

AIR

Anti-inflammatory reliever (AIR) is used to treat asthma in patients with infrequent, mild asthma or hypersensitive lungs. A dose of AIR is taken when required in patients with asthma symptoms two or less times a week.

MART

Maintenance and reliever therapy (MART) is given to patients with asthma who have symptoms three or more times a week. This involves regular maintenance doses of the inhaler with extra doses taken if required (as a reliever).

Official Guidelines

In November 2024 BTS/SIGN/NICE¹ asthma guidance was updated to recommend AIR as first choice in the asthma treatment pathway, followed by MART in patients with more frequent symptoms. AIR and MART are alternatives to the previously recommended choice of a low and medium dose ICS taken regularly with a short acting beta agonist (SABA), such as salbutamol, when required for asthma symptoms.

In April 2025, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency² (MHRA) issued advice reminding prescribers of the risk of overuse of SABAs and the risk of prescribing a SABA without an inhaled corticosteroid in asthma. AIR/MART remove this risk as a combination product is used so no salbutamol is needed.

Benefits of AIR and MART

1. One inhaler device as both preventer and reliever
2. The patient gets the inhaled corticosteroid (ICS) needed to treat the inflammation causing the asthma symptoms at the same time as immediate relief from their symptoms.
3. Formoterol works as fast as salbutamol.
4. The regimen suits people of varying lifestyles, those who have good and poor adherence.
5. The overall ICS dose taken longer term is lower.
6. The risk and frequency of flare ups/attacks (exacerbations) and hospital admissions is reduced.
7. The patient no longer needs a blue salbutamol inhaler.
8. Patients can step up and down their treatment depending on their symptoms and self-management plan.

Caution with AIR/MART

- Not appropriate for patients with diagnoses of conditions other than asthma e.g. COPD.
- Not appropriate for patients who cannot take or tolerate formoterol.
- Inhalers containing bronchodilators other than formoterol cannot be used for MART.
- MART is only licensed for use in the lower and medium strength ICS/formoterol combination products. High strength combinations of an ICS/ formoterol are not licensed for MART.
- AIR/MART products are licensed for different ages. Some products are only suitable from the age of 18 years. Always check the product license.

NHS Lothian Formulary choices for AIR and MART in Patients with Asthma

Inhaler technique – patient must be on a device they can and will use. Please refer to the NHS Lothian Inhaler guide - [Resources for Healthcare Professionals – Respiratory \(nhslothian.scot\)](https://www.nhs.uk/resources-for-healthcare-professionals/respiratory/) and Asthma and Lung UK videos. [How to use your inhaler | Asthma + Lung UK \(asthmaandlung.org.uk\)](https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/)

AIR – 12 years and over -

Symbicort® turbohaler 200/6



Dosage -

1 inhalation when required for asthma symptoms.
Another inhalation can be taken after a few minutes if symptoms persist.
No more than 6 inhalations at a single time.
Usual maximum daily dose is 8 inhalations.
This product has a 3 year expiry and a dose counter.

MART - 12 to 17 years –

Fobumix® easyhaler 80/4.5, Fobumix® easyhaler 160/4.5, Symbicort® turbohaler 100/6 and Symbicort® turbohaler 200/6



Dosage -

1 inhalation twice a day or 2 inhalations once a day.
An extra dose can be taken if required for symptoms with a further inhalation taken after a few minutes if symptoms persist.
No more than 6 inhalations on a single occasion.
Maintenance dose may be increased to moderate - 2 inhalations twice a day.
Usual maximum dose is 8 inhalations in a day.

MART – 18 years and over –

Fobumix® easyhaler 160/4.5, Fostair® Nexthaler 100/6, Proxor® 100/6 pMDI and spacer. (Choice depends on patient preference and ability to use device)



Dosage -

1 inhalation twice a day.
An extra dose can be taken if required for symptoms with a further inhalation taken after a few minutes if symptoms persist.
No more than 6 inhalations on a single occasion.
Maintenance dose may be increased to moderate - 2 inhalations twice a day.
Usual maximum dose is 8 inhalations in a day.



plus



Lothian Recommendations

1. All new patients with a diagnosis of asthma and symptoms that occur three or less times a week should be started on AIR therapy.
2. All new patients with a diagnosis of asthma who are experiencing regular symptoms should be started on an appropriate MART product.
3. Patients already using an ICS/formoterol inhaler can be changed to a MART regimen and have the salbutamol removed.
4. If adequate asthma control is not obtained with low-dose MART treatment, then the maintenance dose of MART should be increased to moderate dose (2 puffs BD with an extra dose if required). Maximum daily dose still applies.
5. The East Regional formulary products that can be used for MART have different in use dates
 - a. Adults age 18+ –
 - i. Fobumix Easyhaler (4 month expiry)
 - ii. Fostair Nexthaler (6 month expiry)
 - iii. Proxor pMDI (3 month expiry) with aerochamber (can be used for 12 months)
 - b. Children age 12 -17 years of age -
 - i. Symbicort turbohaler (3 year expiry)
 - ii. Fobumix easyhaler (4 months expiry)

All patients with asthma should be given a self-management plan sometimes called an asthma action plan. Both AIR and MART action plans are available for printing free from the Asthma and Lung UK website - [Healthcare professionals – Asthma + Lung UK \(asthmaandlung.org.uk\)](https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk) and on the PCRS website - [WP_PCRS_Air-Action-Plan_PRINT_Crops-Bleeds_Sep-19_FINAL.pdf](#) and [WP_PCRS_MART-action-plan_PRINT_Oct24.pdf](#)

References

1. [Overview | Asthma: diagnosis, monitoring and chronic asthma management \(BTS, NICE, SIGN\) | Guidance | NICE](#)
2. [Short-acting beta 2 agonists \(SABA\) \(salbutamol and terbutaline\): reminder of the risks from overuse in asthma and to be aware of changes in the SABA prescribing guidelines - GOV.UK](#)