

Adult asthma - maintenance and reliever therapy (MART)

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Information for Patients

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What is Maintenance and Reliever Therapy (MART)?

Maintenance and Reliever Therapy (MART) is a way of treating asthma using a single inhaler. A MART inhaler contains:

- an **inhaled corticosteroid (ICS)**: this is a preventer medicine. It reduces inflammation in your lungs and helps to stop asthma symptoms and attacks.
- **formoterol**: this is a reliever medicine. It relaxes the muscles around your airways. It helps to open up the airways quickly within 5 minutes and keeps them open for up to 12 hours.

With a MART inhaler you will not need a separate reliever inhaler (such as salbutamol). Using a separate reliever inhaler does not treat the inflammation which a MART inhaler does. Not all combination inhalers can be used in this way. Your healthcare professional will let you know if your inhaler is suitable for MART.

Why should I use MART?

Using a MART inhaler can help reduce your asthma symptoms and the chance of having an asthma emergency (attack) by:

- reducing inflammation in the airways,
- preventing asthma symptoms such as breathlessness and chest tightness,
- acting quickly to relieve symptoms or an asthma emergency (attack),
- reducing your need for high doses of steroid tablets.

There are many different types of combination inhalers that can be used with MART. It is important to have one that you find easy and comfortable to use. Your healthcare team can help you with your inhaler technique to make sure you are using it correctly. This will give you better control of your asthma and help prevent attacks. If you are not happy with the inhaler you have, speak to your healthcare professional about other options.

When is a MART inhaler prescribed?

Your healthcare team may give you a MART inhaler if:

- you have a new diagnosis of asthma
- you have regular symptoms
- or if your asthma is not well controlled with other types of treatment

MART is used by patients 12 years old and over. It can sometimes be prescribed to those aged 5 to 12 years old too.

How do I use my MART inhaler?

You use your MART inhaler:

- every day, usually every morning and every evening, as prescribed.
- take extra doses to relieve any additional asthma symptoms.
- if you have an asthma emergency (attack).

You must take your MART inhaler every day as prescribed to take care of your asthma. This will be either 1 or 2 doses every morning and evening. You must use your inhaler every day, even when you feel well. This lets the medicine build a protective effect in your airways. By doing this, you will be less likely to get symptoms when you come into contact with your asthma triggers. It also helps to stop asthma attacks.

Using my MART inhaler when I get symptoms or in an asthma emergency (attack)

If your asthma is well controlled you may not need to use your reliever doses. But always remember to carry your MART inhaler with you in case symptoms do flare up.

Make sure you know the maximum number of doses you can take each day of your MART inhaler. If you are unsure, ask your GP, pharmacist or nurse.

Contact your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional if you:

- are using extra doses of your MART inhaler on more than 2 days each week.
- need to use the maximum daily dose of your MART inhaler for more than 2 days in a row and your symptoms are not improving. This is a sign of a severe asthma flare up. You should be seen urgently by a healthcare professional. Make sure you know who to contact if this happens.

You may be having a severe asthma worsening which is an emergency if you:

- are struggling to breathe or talk
- have very bad wheezing or a tight chest
- feel your inhaler is not helping
- have a peak flow below 50% of your usual best

What do I do if I have an asthma emergency (attack)?

1. Call 999 for an ambulance straight away.
2. Sit up straight and try to stay calm.
3. Use 1 dose of your reliever every 3 minutes, up to a total of 6 doses. If it is a spray inhaler, take 1 dose at a time through a spacer if you have one. Give each dose 3 minutes to take effect before inhaling the next dose.
4. Call 999 for an ambulance again if you feel worse at any point or do not feel better after inhaling 3 of these doses. This will be about 10 minutes after your first dose.

Will I get side effects from my MART inhaler?

Side effects can happen when using any medicine but not everyone gets them. Common side effects include:

- Palpitations (awareness of your heart beating).
- Trembling or shaking.
- Thrush in your mouth or throat. This is less likely if you rinse your mouth out with water after using your inhaler.
- A hoarse voice.

Things to remember:

- Take your maintenance (preventer) therapy doses 2 times a day. Do this regularly every day even if you feel well.
- **Always** carry your inhaler with you for reliever therapy doses in case you need to use it.
- Know the maximum number of doses of your MART inhaler you can take each day.
- Speak to your healthcare provider if you are taking 8 inhalations per day on a regular basis or if your symptoms continue.
- Your maintenance (preventer) therapy inhaler should last you 1 or 2 months. This is if you are taking your 2 doses a day. You may need to order extra inhalers for your reliever doses. If you need to use more than 3 extra inhalers a year this may mean you have uncontrolled asthma.
- Always remember to check the use by date of your inhaler. Do not use it after the expiry date. Some MART inhalers expire sooner after opening so check the package instructions.
- If you keep a separate inhaler to use as a reliever, check the date. It may need replacing before it is empty if you do not use it often.
- Check the dose counter on your inhaler. When the counter reaches 0 (zero) you need to replace the inhaler. Plan ahead to make sure you do not run out of inhalers, especially over holidays.

Contact details:

Contact your GP or practice team for more advice and support or call NHS 111.

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

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If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net

We are a research hospital and you may be asked to take part in research