A trial of inhaled steroid treatment for suspected asthma



Information for parents and carers

This information leaflet explains what a trial of treatment is and why it is important for you and your child.

You have been told your child (aged 1-5 years) has suspected asthma and should have a trial of inhaled steroid treatment to see if they get better.

What is a trial of treatment?

A trial of treatment for suspected asthma is a temporary plan to see if your child's wheeze gets better when they take a twice daily steroid inhaler. The inhaler is usually given for 8-12 weeks after which the treatment will stop.

Why does my child need it?

It can be difficult to know what is causing the wheezing just by talking to you and looking at your child. The trial of treatment will help your health professional know whether an inhaled steroid is the right treatment for your child or not



How do we do the trial of treatment?

A trial of treatment is done in 3 steps:

1) Your health professional will ask you to give the treatment to your child for usually 8-12 weeks and then ask you to come back and see them. The steroid inhaler needs to be taken twice a day every day, or it won't work. It is important that you give this inhaler to your child with a spacer.
   Click these links to see a video on how to use a spacer with a mask or mouthpiece or scan the QR codes in the box opposite.
   Your doctor will want to know if the wheeze episodes have been better on the treatment. They may ask you to keep a symptom diary or record how much they have used their blue inhaler.
2) After the agreed amount of time, your health professional will then stop your child's steroid inhaler. They will do this even if your child has got better. This is because many preschool children who wheeze just get better by themselves.
3) If your child has more episodes of wheeze whilst off the treatment, your health professional will ask you to let them know. They may then re-start the treatment.

How to use a spacer with a mask:

How to use a spacer with a mouthpiece:

If my child gets better on the trial of treatment, does this mean they have asthma?

No, not necessarily. A lot of children of this age who wheeze will get better by themselves and will not develop asthma.

Some children whose wheeze does get better whilst taking the inhaled steroids may have asthma or may develop asthma in older childhood.

Even if your child does need regular inhaled steroids, they may only need them for a few years. Your health professional will need to review your child at least every year whilst they are on inhaled steroids to check if they still need them.