



ASTHMA AND COVID-19

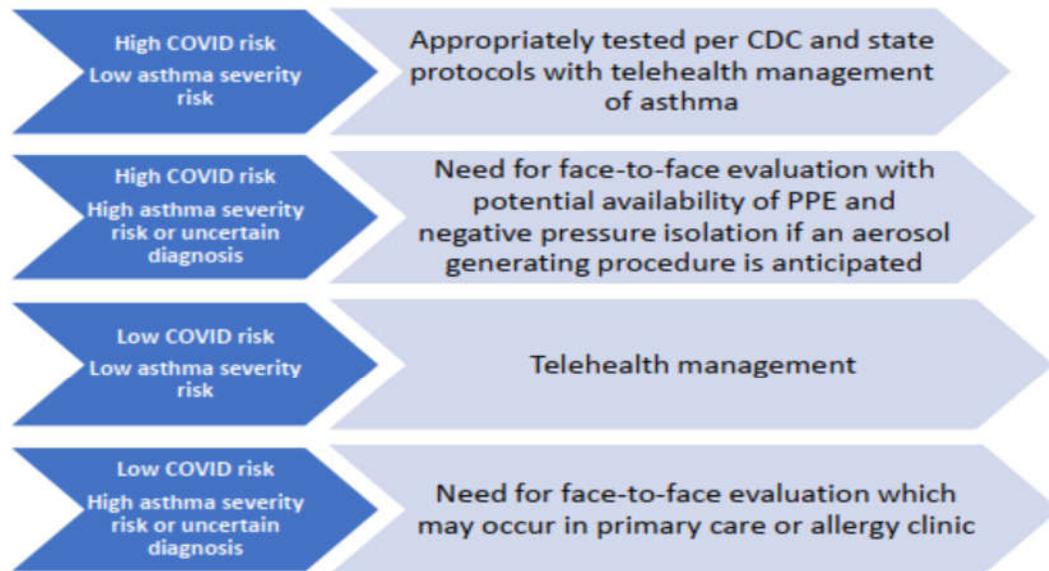
In an effort to keep our Easy Breathing providers informed during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are distributing this newsletter with asthma-specific guidance. This is based upon our best interpretation of available data at this time, but may change as we learn more.

- Little data at this time to suggest increased risk for COVID-19 in patients with asthma
- Asthma should continue to be managed according to national guidelines
- Inhaled and systemic steroids should be continued to treat asthma symptoms/exacerbations in patients known to have asthma
- Critical to maintain optimal asthma control to avoid unnecessary health care utilization and decrease exposure to COVID-19
- Patients receiving biologic therapies should continue to receive these therapies to maintain asthma control
- In the clinical setting, nebulizer use is discouraged unless essential during the pandemic. Nebulized therapy may increase the risk of contagion due to aerosolization
 - Asthma therapy should be delivered by metered dose inhaler
- Some hospitals and pharmacies are experiencing shortages of albuterol inhalers as they are the first line of defense in treating patients in respiratory distress. Recommendations include:
 - Asthma patients ensure they have a proper supply of their medication
 - If MDIs become unavailable, nebulizer use at home may be an appropriate alternative if the patient is not showing symptoms of COVID-19
- Consider telehealth and other methods of virtual encounters to help with social distancing
- See Figure on the following page for an approach to triaging an asthma exacerbation during a pandemic
- Additional information found on the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) website at www.aaaai.org

HIGHLIGHTS

- Asthma and COVID-19
- Black-box warning for montelukast
- EPR-4 guidelines
- Triaging asthma exacerbation during a pandemic

Figure 3: Triage Approach to the Patient with an Asthma Exacerbation During a Pandemic



https://education.aaaai.org/sites/default/files/COVID19_US%20FINAL.pdf

Statement from U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Issue: The FDA is strengthening existing warnings about serious behavior and mood-related changes with montelukast (Singulair and generics). Although prescribing information already included warning about mental health side effects, including suicidal thoughts or actions, many health care professionals and patients/caregivers were not aware of the risk and the FDA deemed a boxed warning to be appropriate. Given the potential risks, montelukast should not be used for the treatment of mild allergic rhinitis.

For patients with asthma, the FDA recommends that health care professionals consider the benefits and risks of mental health side effects before prescribing montelukast.

National Asthma Guidelines to be Updated

- ◆ The National Asthma Education and Prevention Program Coordinating Committee (NAEPPCC) Expert Panel Four (EPR-4) Working Group was established in 2018 to update the 2007 Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma.
- ◆ We are currently reviewing the draft guidelines to determine changes in Easy Breathing. Once guidelines are finalized we will follow-up with information on how to incorporate the new guidelines into your practice.



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