

Factsheet 38

Updated on 31st March 2021

COVID-19 and Asthma

Introduction

As the pandemic evolves, we have started to learn more about the virus itself, its variants, and the effect this has on different populations and the impact on long term conditions. The Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) has produced interim and updated guidance around COVID-19 and asthma. The following factsheet aims to explore the relationship between COVID-19 and asthma and what advice we can provide to people with asthma so they can make an informed decision around their health.

COVID-19 and Asthma

Are people with asthma at increased risk of COVID-19, or severe COVID-19?

People with asthma do not appear to be at increased risk of acquiring COVID-19.¹ A meta-analysis of 150 studies looked at whether asthma increases the risk of morbidity and severity of COVID-19. The results of the analysis did not provide clear evidence of increased risk of COVID-19 diagnosis, hospitalisation, severity, or mortality, due to asthma.²

Should people with asthma continue to use inhaled corticosteroids (ICS)?

People with asthma should continue to use their inhaled corticosteroids. In accordance with BTS (2020) there is no evidence that ICS increases the risk of getting COVID-19.³ In addition, GINA (2021) indicates that one study of hospitalised patients aged ≥ 50 years with COVID-19, ICS use in those with asthma was associated with lower mortality than in patients without an underlying respiratory condition.¹ Therefore, patients should continue to use their ICS as indicated.

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Asthma exacerbations and COVID-19

GINA 2021 indicates that many countries have seen a reduction in asthma exacerbations and influenza-related illness through the pandemic. Although the reasons for this are unknown, it is quite possible, that lockdown, improved hygiene, social distancing, and masks, all played a key role in reducing respiratory infections.

References:

1. GINA: Interim Guidance about COVID-19 and Asthma (2021). Available at: <https://ginasthma.org/>
2. Asthma in Adult Patients with COVID-19: Prevalence and Risk of Severe Disease (2021). Available at: <https://www.atsjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1164/rccm.202008-3266OC>
3. Advice for Healthcare Professionals Treating People with Asthma (adults) in relation to COVID-19 Available at: <https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/document-library/quality-improvement/covid-19/bts-advice-for-healthcare-professionals-treating-patients-with-asthma/>