

February 8, 2021

For providers currently prescribing inhaled albuterol

Dear providers,

If you currently prescribe inhaled albuterol for patients with asthma, please note that low dose inhaled corticosteroid (ICS)/formoterol (e.g., *budesonide/formoterol* or *Symbicort*) is now the preferred reliever medication for patients ≥ 12 years of age for all categories of asthma severity.

- Guideline recommendations: This based on recent guidelines from the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA). For a summary of the GINA guidelines, visit tinyurl.com/y5aqvnod.
- Data: As-needed low dose ICS-formoterol reduced the risk of severe exacerbations by about two-thirds compared to short-acting $\beta 2$ agonist (SABA)-only treatment in adults and adolescents with mild asthma. This was the case in patients both with and without concurrent maintenance controller therapy.
- HPSM coverage of ICS/formoterol products:
 - MEDI-CAL, CCS, HEALTHWORX: generic budesonide/formoterol
 - CAREADVANTAGE CAL MEDICONNECT: brand Symbicort

Please Note: SABA (e.g., *albuterol*) is still the recommended rescue inhaler for 1) children between the ages of 6 to 11 years of age and 2) patients taking combination ICS-LABA medications with a different LABA (e.g., *Advair*).

If you have any questions about this letter or the patient information provided, please do not hesitate to contact the HPSM Pharmacy Department at 650-616-2088.

Thank you,

The Health Plan of San Mateo

1. Global Initiative for Asthma. 2020 GINA report global strategy for asthma management and prevention.

https://ginasthma.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/GINA-2020-full-report_-final-_wms.pdf (Accessed June 1, 2020).

2. O'Byrne PM, FitzGerald JM, Bateman ED, Barnes PJ, Zhong N, Keen C, Jorup C, et al. Inhaled budesonide-formoterol as needed in mild asthma. *N Engl J Med* 2018;378:1865-76.