

March 15, 2021

ICS-formoterol in a single inhaler is now recommended as the preferred treatment option for moderate to severe persistent asthma in patients ≥ 4 years of age.

Dear providers,

If you currently prescribe ICS-LABA for a controller medication + SABA (e.g., *albuterol*) as needed for rescue, please note that recently updated guidelines now recommend **ICS/formoterol** (e.g., *budesonide/formoterol* or *Symbicort*) **ALONE, in a single inhaler, for the treatment of moderate to severe persistent asthma in patients ≥ 4 years of age.**

This new strategy is called “SMART” therapy (*single maintenance and reliever therapy*), and it allows for the use of only ONE inhaler to meet BOTH the patient’s controller and rescue therapy needs.

- **This is based on the recently updated 2020 EPR-3 guidelines**, which now takes into consideration new data demonstrating the superiority of SMART over ICS-LABA + SABA for reducing asthma exacerbations in this patient population.¹ For a summary of the EPR-3 guidelines, see the [Focused Updates to the 2020 Asthma Management Guidelines](#).
- **HPSM coverage of ICS/formoterol products:**
 - Medi-Cal, CCS, and HealthWorx: generic budesonide/formoterol
 - CareAdvantage Cal Medicconnect: brand Symbicort

Please Note: SABA (e.g., *albuterol*) is still the recommended rescue inhaler for: 1) children < 4 years of age, 2) children and adults ≥ 4 years of age with intermittent or mild persistent asthma, or 3) patients ≥ 4 years of age with moderate to severe persistent asthma who opt to continue taking combination ICS-salmeterol (e.g., *Advair*) as maintenance therapy rather than fully transitioning to ICS/formoterol alone.

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. 2020 Focused Updates to the Asthma Management Guidelines: A Report from the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program Coordinating Committee Expert Panel Working Group. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/all-publications-and-resources/2020-focused-updates-asthma-management-guidelines> (Accessed March 9, 2021).