

Breathe Easy: Helping You AND the Planet



Your guide to “greener” inhalers and staying healthy - for parents, carers, children and young adults



What's all this talk about "Going Green"?

You might have heard people talking about:

- “Going greener”
- “Reducing your carbon footprint”
- “Stopping climate change”

But what does this actually mean for **you**, especially if you have asthma or use an inhaler?

Let's break it down...



What is a Carbon Footprint?

Your **carbon footprint** is the amount of greenhouse gases (like carbon dioxide) that you, or **things you do or use**, release into the air. These gases are **not** harmful to your **lungs**.

These gases are causing the Earth to heat up though – that's called **climate change**.



Did You Know?

The **NHS** (our health service) causes about **4%**¹ of the UK's carbon footprint. Some of that comes from **inhalers**!



How do Inhalers affect the planet?

In England, over **65 million inhalers**² are prescribed every year.

About **70%**³ of these are **pressurised metered dose inhalers (pMDIs)**. These use a **gas propellant** to push medicine out.



That gas is often a very strong **greenhouse gas** – thousands of times more powerful than carbon dioxide.



That's why switching to different inhalers, like **Dry Powder Inhalers (DPIs)** can make a big difference.



What can YOU do?

DO NOT stop taking your prescribed inhalers as the “greenest” inhalers are the ones you will **use and can use correctly**. Find out more in the [next box](#)



Here's how you can help the planet AND look after your lungs:

Stay Protected

- Get your **vaccines** (like flu, COVID-19, or pneumonia)
- If you smoke (or someone around you does), ask for help to **quit smoking**
- Try to avoid your **asthma triggers**
- Go to your **asthma reviews** at your GP surgery
- Use your **asthma plan**



Use Your Inhaler the Right Way

Make sure your **inhaler technique** is good. It's important the medicine gets into your lungs to work. Find out more about using your inhaler the right way on the [next page](#).



Don't Waste or Dump Inhalers

- Only order what you need.
- Return used inhalers to the **pharmacy**, don't throw them in the bin - find out more on the [next page](#)



Using Your Inhaler the Right Way

- If using your **reliever inhaler** 3 or more times a week, see your doctor or asthma nurse for a review.
- Take your **preventer** every day as prescribed.



- **Always** use a **spacer** with your pMDI if you have one — it means the medicine will reach your lungs better.
- Clean your spacer **weekly** and replace it **yearly**.
- Always **rinse your mouth** after using a steroid inhaler.
- Make sure your **inhaler technique** is good — you can watch a video on Asthma + Lung UK to remind you.

www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/living-with/inhaler-videos



Should I Switch to a “Greener” Inhaler?

That depends on what works **best for you**.

Many people can safely switch to a dry powder inhaler (often shortened to **DPI**). These inhalers:

- Have a carbon footprint 20x lower than most pMDIs
- Do not need a spacer
- Come with a dose counter so you know when it's nearly empty



But DPIs aren't for everyone — like **small children** or if you're allergic to **lactose** (a milk protein) or **haven't yet** mastered the correct **technique**.



Want to find out if a “greener” inhaler would work for you?

Ask your **GP, nurse, or pharmacist** next time you're in, or book a quick phone call!

If you can't switch to a DPI, ask the doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you are suitable for a higher dose pMDI so you need **fewer puffs** - this can also reduce your carbon footprint.



How to Get Rid of Inhalers the Right Way

- ❌ Don't throw used inhalers in the bin
- ✅ Return them to your **local pharmacy**

They can recycle or safely destroy them — **much better for the planet** than landfill where the harmful propellants can leak into the environment!

👉 If every inhaler in the UK was returned instead of binned, each year we could save as much carbon as driving a car around the world **88,606 times!**⁴ 😲



Every Breath Counts

By learning how your inhaler affects the environment, you're already making a difference.

Ask your nurse or doctor about the best inhaler for **your health** and for the **planet**.

Quick Reminders

- ✅ Take your inhaler properly
- ✅ Go to asthma checks
- ✅ Don't waste inhalers
- ✅ Ask about greener options
- ✅ Return used ones to the pharmacy

Find this leaflet here

