

New asthma guidelines: anti-inflammatory treatment is best

The Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon. Mark Butler MP, last night launched updated guidelines from the [National Asthma Council Australia](#) (NAC) that include a significant change in how Australians will be advised to manage their asthma.

The NAC's [Australian Asthma Handbook](#) is the national guidelines for asthma management used by doctors, pharmacists and respiratory nurses in Australia and provides evidence-based, practical advice for asthma management.

The most significant new recommendation announced encourages health professionals to stop prescribing or advising treatment with as-needed 'blue puffers' to manage asthma in adults and adolescents aged 12 years.

Clinical Associate Professor Debbie Rigby, pharmacist and Clinical Executive Lead, NAC, said no adult or adolescent should manage their asthma solely with a blue puffer.

"A 'blue puffer' doesn't treat the cause of asthma, or prevent symptoms or flare-ups - it just relieves symptoms and helps stop asthma attacks that have already started.

"Relying only on a blue puffer, or needing it often, means you are at risk of severe asthma attacks, emergency department visits and hospital stays," she said.

The NAC Australian Asthma Handbook guidelines now recommend that all adults and adolescents with asthma should use an 'anti-inflammatory' reliever.

"This provides a different type of quick-relief medicine and helps treat the cause of asthma, not just the symptoms," said Clinical Associate Professor Debbie Rigby.

Minister Butler said the 2.8 million Australians living with asthma all depend on their healthcare teams to make informed decisions - guided by the latest clinical advice and practical tools – to deliver the best care and treatment possible.

"The updated Australian Asthma Handbook will support primary health professionals to better diagnose, treat and manage their patients with the condition.

"It is the latest part of a national push to improve how asthma and related respiratory conditions are managed, helping those living with asthma to breathe easier and live well," said Minister Butler.

The launch of the updated NAC Australian Asthma Handbook and website follows extensive research and review of national and international evidence, led by a multidisciplinary network of expert primary care and specialist contributors on the NAC's Guidelines Committee.

Professor Nick Zwar, Chair of the NAC Guidelines Committee, said the most critical take-home message for patients and carers of people with asthma is that they are at risk of asthma flare-ups, which can be severe, due to over-reliance on blue puffers.

"Patients sometimes initially think that an anti-inflammatory reliever doesn't work as well as their blue puffer, but they need to understand that it is working - they are getting fast relief from symptoms, but also, they are getting that important anti-inflammatory effect for their airways.

“The aim of your asthma treatment should be to maintain good control of asthma symptoms and prevent flare-ups and the new guidelines clearly outline the best way to achieve this.

“We also encourage adults and children aged 12 years and over with asthma to carry their anti-inflammatory reliever at all times and use it when they experience difficulty breathing, or before exercise, if needed,” he said.

Dr Anita Muñoz, Chair Victoria Faculty, RACGP and Practice Owner, congratulated the National Asthma Council Australia on the launch of the updated asthma guidelines and encouraged all RACGP members to take time to review the new recommendations.

“Many Australians are managing their own asthma just with blue puffers that they buy over the counter at the pharmacy, but that is no longer recommended and encourages risky over-reliance.

“We encourage people with asthma to see their GP to discuss how the new recommendations may affect them and make sure they update their written asthma action plan,” said Dr Muñoz.

The revised 2025 edition also includes changes for improved diagnosis and management of asthma in infants and children and difficult to treat asthma.

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The [National Asthma Council Australia](#) is a collaboration of four member organisations (APNA, ASCIA, PSA and RACGP) and the national trusted authority for asthma knowledge. We set and disseminate the standards for asthma care through our responsive and evidence-based asthma guidelines - the [Australian Asthma Handbook](#) and resources for primary health care professionals. Our [Sensitive Choice](#) program empowers consumers to identify asthma and allergy-aware products and services.