



# Advisory from the Saudi Initiative for Asthma

The Saudi Initiative for Asthma (SINA) Advises on Asthma Management of Adults and Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic

## Recommendations to Healthcare Providers

The Saudi Initiative for Asthma (SINA) is a subsidiary of the Saudi Thoracic Society (STS). As part of its commitment toward patients with asthma during the pandemic of COVID-19 caused by SARS-CoV-2, the SINA panel would like to share the following recommendations for all patients with asthma:

### Outpatient Management:

It is a targeted goal to keep patients with Asthma well controlled during this period of COVID-19 pandemic, Hence the SINA Panel recommends the following:



- Patients with asthma should continue their regular medications; including inhaled corticosteroids, as prescribed by their doctor. Having asthma controlled at all the times is crucial during COVID-19 pandemic which affects the respiratory system as the main target.
- Patients with asthma are strongly recommended for strict adherence to the treatment plan by their doctors, including avoiding triggers and proper technique of using inhalers.
- Asthmatic patients who have been on a biological agent (injections) should continue such therapies as prescribed. Patients should contact their healthcare providers to ensure the continuity of their injections. Consideration for home administration of biological therapies is recommended to be considered whenever this option is feasible based on the manufacturer licensed guidelines to comply with Ministry of Health advise to "Stay-Home".
- Patients should be Provided with an updated guided self-action plan that facilitate early intervention with acute asthma attacks.
- Patients with allergic rhinitis should continue to take their nasal corticosteroids as prescribed by their treating doctor as well as other treatments.
- Suspend any routine spirometry testing to reduce the risk of viral transmission, strict infection control measures should be applied if pulmonary function testing is deemed to be necessary.

### Acute Asthma Management:

In case of acute asthma attack which necessitate patients to come to the hospital for further management, the SINA Panel advises the following:



- Due to the increased risk of generating aerosolized particles and the potential risk of airborne transmission of viruses, it is recommended to avoid the routine use of nebulizers to administer asthma medications in emergency rooms and acute care units. Alternatively, pressurized metered dose inhalers (pMDI) coupled with proper valved holding chambers (VHC) should be used to deliver such medications whenever that is feasible.
- Strict airborne isolation precautions should be applied whenever nebulizers are used in the setting of acute asthma management.
- Spacers or other devices MUST NOT be shared at any time.
- Short course of oral corticosteroid can be considered during acute attack of asthma based on the recommendation of the treating doctor as it may prevent serious consequences.
- During acute exacerbations, asthmatic patients should continue their controller asthma treatment, including inhaled ones.