



Access to anti-inflammatory inhalers for everyone with asthma – still an urgent need

On World Asthma Day 2026 (5 May), the call to action remains in effect: '**Access to anti-inflammatory inhalers for everyone with asthma – still an urgent need**'. The Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS), of which Pan African Thoracic Society is a founding member, continues to emphasize the need to ensure that all people with asthma can access inhaled medications that are essential for controlling the underlying disease and treating attacks.

This year's World Asthma Day theme reinforces that every person with asthma, including most pre-school children with asthma, should receive inhaled corticosteroids. These inhalers reduce the person's risk of asthma attacks and reduce preventable asthma deaths.

Preferably, the inhaler should be a combination 2-in-1 inhaler containing both an inhaled corticosteroid and a quick-acting reliever. Together, they treat the asthma symptoms, prevent asthma attacks, and reduce hospital admissions.

Asthma is one of the most common chronic non-communicable diseases that affects over 260 million people. Asthma is responsible for over 450,000 deaths each year worldwide. Most of these deaths are preventable.

Asthma attacks cause great distress for sufferers, their families and their careers. Asthma attacks may result in hospital admission and, in some cases, death.

Asthma attacks involve obstruction of the air passages in the lungs which reduces the ability of the person to inhale life sustaining oxygen into the body. The airway obstruction is caused by **spasm and tightening** of the airway muscles, and **inflammation** which causes both **swelling** of the walls of the air passages and **mucus or phlegm blocking** the airways.

The short-acting bronchodilator relievers (salbutamol, albuterol, terbutaline, SABAs) **only** relieve the spasm and tightening of the muscles in the air passages but inhaled corticosteroid-containing medications prevent asthma attacks by treating the underlying inflammation that causes asthma. **Inhaled corticosteroids are essential for treating and controlling asthma!**

"In the GINA 2026 update, the preferred reliever in both GINA track 1 and track 2 is an anti-inflammatory reliever (AIR), combining a fast-acting bronchodilator with an inhaled corticosteroid (ICS) in a single inhaler, since an AIR not only provides rapid symptom relief thanks to fast bronchodilatation, but also tackles the underlying airway inflammation and reduces the risk of asthma attacks." Professor Guy Brusselle, Chairman GINA Board of Directors

Doctors and allied health care professionals are called upon to ensure that all people with asthma, including most pre-school children with asthma, are prescribed evidence-based,

essential, inhaled corticosteroid-containing medication. These should be prescribed in addition to, or in combination with, reliever medication, to prevent the continuing avoidable morbidity and mortality from asthma.

In low-middle-income countries, lack of availability or high cost of inhaled medicines, especially inhaled corticosteroid-containing inhalers, are major contributors to the fact that many attacks and 96% of global asthma deaths occur in these countries.

Even in high income countries, high costs can mean that many people with asthma have limited access to essential inhaled medicines, resulting in poorly controlled asthma and preventable asthma deaths.

Policy makers, governments, payers, and pharmaceutical industry manufacturers and suppliers are called upon to ensure inhaled corticosteroids are affordable and available for all those with asthma.

We call on everyone to increase their efforts to ensure **"Access to anti-inflammatory inhalers for everyone with asthma"**, in all countries throughout the world. See www.ginasthma.org/reports

Note: minor edits have been made to the original text about World Asthma Day 2026, to emphasize that inhaled corticosteroids are recommended by GINA for the majority of pre-school children with asthma, as well as for all adults, adolescents and children aged 6 years and older with asthma.

World Asthma Day was first held in 1998 and has grown each year to become one of the most important Asthma events globally. On World Asthma Day, hundreds of awareness-raising activities will take place in countries all over the world. Further information about GINA and World Asthma Day can be found at GINA's website: www.ginasthma.org. Documents detailing GINA's global strategy for diagnosis, management, and prevention of asthma are also available at www.ginasthma.org.

About the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS)

[The Forum of International Respiratory Societies](#) (FIRS) is an organisation comprised of the world's leading international respiratory societies working together to improve lung health globally: [American College of Chest Physicians](#) (CHEST), [American Thoracic Society](#) (ATS), [Asian Pacific Society of Respiriology](#) (APSR), [Asociación Latino Americana De Tórax](#) (ALAT), [European Respiratory Society](#) (ERS), [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases](#) (The Union), [Pan African Thoracic Society](#) (PATS), [Global Initiative for Asthma](#) (GINA), and the [Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease](#) (GOLD).

The goal of FIRS is to unify and enhance efforts to improve lung health through the combined work of its more than 70,000 members globally.

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