

## Asthma Management Stepwise Approach

**DEPARTMENT: Utilization Management Physician Practice Guidelines**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: 08/18**

**DATE LAST REVIEWED: 12/21**

**SOURCE:** <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/sites/default/files/publications/AsthmaCliniciansGuideDesign-508.pdf>

**RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES:**

- 1) Stepwise approach for managing asthma in youths ≥12 years of age and adults

**AGES 12+ YEARS: STEPWISE APPROACH FOR MANAGEMENT OF ASTHMA**

	Intermittent Asthma	Management of Persistent Asthma in Individuals Ages 12+ Years				
Treatment	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6 <sup>■</sup>
<b>Preferred</b>	PRN SABA	Daily low-dose ICS and PRN SABA or PRN concomitant ICS and SABA▲	Daily and PRN combination low-dose ICS-formoterol▲	Daily and PRN combination medium-dose ICS-formoterol▲	Daily medium-high dose ICS-LABA + LAMA and PRN SABA ▲	Daily high-dose ICS-LABA + oral systemic corticosteroids + PRN SABA
<b>Alternative</b>		Daily LTRA* and PRN SABA or Cromolyn,* or Nedocromil,* or Zileuton,* or Theophylline,* and PRN SABA	Daily medium-dose ICS and PRN SABA or Daily low-dose ICS-LABA, or daily low-dose ICS + LAMA,▲ or daily low-dose ICS + LTRA,* and PRN SABA or Daily low-dose ICS + Theophylline* or Zileuton,* and PRN SABA	Daily medium-dose ICS-LABA or daily medium-dose ICS + LAMA, and PRN SABA▲ or Daily medium-dose ICS + LTRA,* or daily medium-dose ICS + Theophylline,* or daily medium-dose ICS + Zileuton,* and PRN SABA	Daily medium-high dose ICS-LABA or daily high-dose ICS + LTRA,* and PRN SABA	
		Steps 2-4: Conditionally recommend the use of subcutaneous immunotherapy as an adjunct treatment to standard pharmacotherapy in individuals ≥ 5 years of age whose asthma is controlled at the initiation, build up, and maintenance phases of immunotherapy▲			Consider adding Asthma Biologics (e.g., anti-IgE, anti-IL5, anti-IL5R, anti-IL4/IL13)**	

**Assess Control**

- First check adherence, inhaler technique, environmental factors,▲ and comorbid conditions.
- Step up** if needed; reassess in 2-6 weeks
- Step down** if possible (if asthma is well controlled for at least 3 consecutive months)

Consult with asthma specialist if Step 4 or higher is required. Consider consultation at Step 3.

Control assessment is a key element of asthma care. This involves both impairment and risk. Use of objective measures, self-reported control, and health care utilization are complementary and should be employed on an ongoing basis, depending on the individual's clinical situation.

**Abbreviations:** ICS, inhaled corticosteroid; LABA, long-acting beta<sub>2</sub>-agonist; LAMA, long-acting muscarinic antagonist; LTRA, leukotriene receptor antagonist; SABA, inhaled short-acting beta<sub>2</sub>-agonist

▲ Updated based on the 2020 guidelines.  
 \* Cromolyn, Nedocromil, LTRAs including Zileuton and montelukast, and Theophylline were not considered for this update, and/or have limited availability for use in the United States, and/or have an increased risk of adverse consequences and need for monitoring that make their use less desirable. The FDA issued a Boxed Warning for montelukast in March 2020.  
 \*\* The AHRQ systematic reviews that informed this report did not include studies that examined the role of asthma biologics (e.g. anti-IgE, anti-IL5, anti-IL5R, anti-IL4/IL13). Thus, this report does not contain specific recommendations for the use of biologics in asthma in Steps 5 and 6.  
 ■ Data on the use of LAMA therapy in individuals with severe persistent asthma (Step 6) were not included in the AHRQ systematic review and thus no recommendation is made.

2) Stepwise approach for managing asthma in children 5 to 11 years of age

**AGES 5-11 YEARS: STEPWISE APPROACH FOR MANAGEMENT OF ASTHMA**

	Intermittent Asthma	Management of Persistent Asthma in Individuals Ages 5-11 Years				
Treatment	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6
<b>Preferred</b>	PRN SABA	Daily low-dose ICS and PRN SABA	Daily and PRN combination low-dose ICS-formoterol▲	Daily and PRN combination medium-dose ICS-formoterol▲	Daily high-dose ICS-LABA and PRN SABA	Daily high-dose ICS-LABA + oral systemic corticosteroid and PRN SABA
<b>Alternative</b>		Daily LTRA,* or Cromolyn,* or Nedocromil,* or Theophylline,* and PRN SABA	Daily medium-dose ICS and PRN SABA or Daily low-dose ICS-LABA, or daily low-dose ICS + LTRA,* or daily low-dose ICS + Theophylline,* and PRN SABA	Daily medium-dose ICS-LABA and PRN SABA or Daily medium-dose ICS + LTRA* or daily medium-dose ICS + Theophylline,* and PRN SABA	Daily high-dose ICS + LTRA* or daily high-dose ICS + Theophylline,* and PRN SABA	Daily high-dose ICS + LTRA* + oral systemic corticosteroid or daily high-dose ICS + Theophylline* + oral systemic corticosteroid, and PRN SABA
		Steps 2-4: Conditionally recommend the use of subcutaneous immunotherapy as an adjunct treatment to standard pharmacotherapy in individuals ≥ 5 years of age whose asthma is controlled at the initiation, build up, and maintenance phases of immunotherapy▲			Consider Omalizumab**▲	

**Assess Control**

- First check adherence, inhaler technique, environmental factors,▲ and comorbid conditions.
- **Step up** if needed; reassess in 2-6 weeks
- **Step down** if possible (if asthma is well controlled for at least 3 consecutive months)

Consult with asthma specialist if Step 4 or higher is required. Consider consultation at Step 3.

Control assessment is a key element of asthma care. This involves both impairment and risk. Use of objective measures, self-reported control, and health care utilization are complementary and should be employed on an ongoing basis, depending on the individual's clinical situation.

**Abbreviations:** ICS, inhaled corticosteroid; LABA, long-acting beta<sub>2</sub>-agonist; LTRA, leukotriene receptor antagonist; SABA, inhaled short-acting beta<sub>2</sub>-agonist

▲ Updated based on the 2020 guidelines.

\* Cromolyn, Nedocromil, LTRAs including montelukast, and Theophylline were not considered in this update and/or have limited availability for use in the United States, and/or have an increased risk of adverse consequences and need for monitoring that make their use less desirable. The FDA issued a Boxed Warning for montelukast in March 2020.

\*\* Omalizumab is the only asthma biologic currently FDA-approved for this age range.

3) Stepwise approach for managing asthma in children 0 to 4 years of age

**AGES 0-4 YEARS: STEPWISE APPROACH FOR MANAGEMENT OF ASTHMA**

	Intermittent Asthma	Management of Persistent Asthma in Individuals Ages 0-4 Years				
Treatment	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6
<b>Preferred</b>	PRN SABA and At the start of RTI: Add short course daily ICS <sup>▲</sup>	Daily low-dose ICS and PRN SABA	Daily low-dose ICS-LABA and PRN SABA <sup>▲</sup> or Daily low-dose ICS + montelukast,* or daily medium-dose ICS, and PRN SABA	Daily medium-dose ICS-LABA and PRN SABA	Daily high-dose ICS-LABA and PRN SABA	Daily high-dose ICS-LABA + oral systemic corticosteroid and PRN SABA
<b>Alternative</b>		Daily montelukast* or Cromolyn,* and PRN SABA		Daily medium-dose ICS + montelukast* and PRN SABA	Daily high-dose ICS + montelukast* and PRN SABA	Daily high-dose ICS + montelukast*+ oral systemic corticosteroid and PRN SABA
			For children age 4 years only, see Step 3 and Step 4 on Management of Persistent Asthma in Individuals Ages 5-11 Years diagram.			

**Assess Control**

- First check adherence, inhaler technique, environmental factors,<sup>▲</sup> and comorbid conditions.
- **Step up** if needed; reassess in 4-6 weeks
- **Step down** if possible (if asthma is well controlled for at least 3 consecutive months)

Consult with asthma specialist if Step 3 or higher is required. Consider consultation at Step 2.

Control assessment is a key element of asthma care. This involves both impairment and risk. Use of objective measures, self-reported control, and health care utilization are complementary and should be employed on an ongoing basis, depending on the individual's clinical situation.

**Abbreviations:** ICS, inhaled corticosteroid; LABA, long-acting beta<sub>2</sub>-agonist; SABA, inhaled short-acting beta<sub>2</sub>-agonist; RTI, respiratory tract infection; PRN, as needed

<sup>▲</sup> Updated based on the 2020 guidelines.

\* Cromolyn and montelukast were not considered for this update and/or have limited availability for use in the United States. The FDA issued a Boxed Warning for montelukast in March 2020.