**Asthma pill could prove 'game-changer' for people with severe symptoms**

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'For me, it felt like a complete wonder drug and I can’t wait for it to be available,' says a trial patient

A new treatment for [asthma](http://www.independent.co.uk/topic/Asthma) could be a “game-changer” treatment against the condition, according to a new study.

The medicine, Fevipiprant, is the first new asthma pill to be developed in 20 years – users still mostly use inhalers or steroids to relieve their symptoms.

But taking Fevipiprant twice daily was shown to “significantly decrease” asthma symptoms and improve lung function, reduce inflammation of the lungs and repair the lining of patient’s airwaves, according to scientists from the University of Leicester.

In addition to lacking the harmful effects of steroids, Fevipiprant could slash the numbers of asthma attacks suffered by patients and greatly improve the quality of life of around 250,000 people who suffer from severe forms of the condition.

“I knew straight away that I had been given the drug,” said Gaye Stokes, who participated in trials of Fevipiprant. “I felt like a completely different person. I had more get up and go, I was less wheezy and for the first time in years I felt really, really well.

“For me, it felt like a complete wonder drug and I can’t wait for it to be available because I really think it could make a huge difference to me.”

However, Ms Stokes said her health went “downhill again very quickly” after the trial finished.

The study, published in [*The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(16)30179-5/abstract) journal, examined 60 patients with moderate or severe asthma. It was designed primarily to examine the effects on inflammation in the airways by measuring the sputum eosinophil count – the amount of a white blood cell, which increases with asthma, and is used to assess the severity of the condition.

While half the patients were given a placebo, those who took Fevipiprant on top of their normal medication experienced a marked drop in the sputum eosinophil count, from an average of 5.4 per cent to 1.1 per cent over 12 weeks.

“This new drug could be a game-changer for future treatment of asthma,” said lead researcher Professor Chris Brightling.

He continued: “A unique feature of this study was how it included measurements of symptoms, lung function using breathing tests, sampling of the airway wall and CT scans of the chest to give a complete picture of how the new drug works.

“Most treatments might improve some of these features of disease, but with Fevipiprant improvements were seen with all of the types of tests.

“We already know that using treatments to target eosinophilic airway inflammation can substantially reduce asthma attacks.

“This new treatment, Fevipiprant, could likewise help to stop preventable asthma attacks, reduce hospital admissions and improve day-to-day symptoms- making it a ‘game changer’ for future treatment.”

Asthma UK greeted the findings with “cautious optimism” but said they show “massive promise”.

"The possibility of taking a pill instead of using an inhaler will be a very welcome one, particularly as this study focused on people who develop the condition in later life, some of whom we know can struggle with the dexterity required to use an inhaler,” said Asthma UK’s Dr Samantha Walker.

She added: "More research is needed and we're a long way off seeing a pill for asthma being made available over the pharmacy counter, but it's an exciting development."