

# Prescribing and Medicines Optimisation Guidance

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## 1. Crushing/opening medication queries

When dealing with enquires regarding crushing tablets or opening capsules, please remember to keep in mind the safety issues for staff surrounding opening capsules/crushing medications. Medications such as hormones, steroids, antibiotics or chemotherapy (cytotoxic) medicines may require additional precautions and so may not be appropriate to crush/open these tablets/capsules. The SPS offers advice in this link:

<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/crushing-tablets-or-opening-capsules-in-a-care-home-setting/>

This Q&A considers issues needed to be considered when crushing tablets or opening capsules in a care home setting.

## 2. SPS Advice: Can topical steroids be applied at the same time as emollients? August 2020 ([Link](#))

The optimal order and timing of application of emollients and topical steroids is not known, due to a lack of good quality evidence. There is general agreement there should be an interval of at least several minutes, but a lack of guidance on which should be applied first.

## 3. British Medical Journal: Coroner warns about poor drug reviews after patient dies from tramadol overdose. 5 August 2020 ([Link- BMJ subscription required](#))

A senior coroner has demanded action by NHS England to ensure that GPs monitor repeat prescriptions properly, after an 84 year old man with dementia, died from an overdose of tramadol, for which he had had a repeat prescription of 100 capsules a month over an extended period. The coroner's report can be accessed on the link below:

<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Peter-Cole-2020-0123.pdf>

#### 4. Upgrade to Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) Phase 4 ([Link](#))

To help prepare for winter, the deployment of EPS Phase 4 has been accelerated. This allows EPS to be used for patients without a pharmacy nomination. Phase 4 significantly reduces the need to hand-sign prescriptions and deal with lost prescriptions. You will also be able to track the status of more prescriptions using the EPS Prescription Tracker ([Link](#)). Phase 4 functionality will be enabled automatically for all TPP SystemOne and EMIS Web practices that use EPS (including dispensing practices) from 7 September 2020.

To ensure a smooth transition, it's recommended you enable Phase 4 in your practice before this date. This will give you more time to access support from your CCG EPS lead if necessary. You can contact your CCG to arrange a go-live date. For most practices the move requires minimal action, but do consult the support materials and readiness checklist.

#### 5. NPSA: New Steroid Emergency Card to support early recognition and treatment of adrenal crisis in adults ([Link](#))

A National Patient Safety Alert has been issued regarding the introduction of a new patient-held Steroid Emergency Card to support the early recognition and treatment of adrenal crisis in adults.

The omission of steroids for patients **with primary or secondary adrenal insufficiency** can lead to adrenal crisis; a medical emergency which if left untreated can be fatal. If these patients become acutely ill or are subject to major body stressors, such as from trauma or surgery, they require higher doses of steroids to prevent an adrenal crisis. While substantial resources exist, clinical staff are not always aware of the risk of adrenal crisis, or the correct clinical response should one occur. The alert asks providers to ensure all eligible patients are issued with a Steroid Emergency Card; and to put processes in place to check if a patient has a Steroid Emergency Card ahead of any emergency treatment, elective surgery, or other invasive procedures.

You can view the new Emergency Steroid Card on the Society for Endocrinology's Adrenal Crisis Information webpage. [Link](#)

The Emergency Steroid Card can be ordered from the usual suppliers:

- a) NHS Forms at NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA)  
<http://www.nhsforms.co.uk/>
- b) Primary Care Support England (PCSE online)  
<https://secure.pcse.england.nhs.uk/forms/pcsssignin.aspx>

Full details are found within the 2 page NPSA document. [NPSA link](#)