

# Prescribing and Medicines Optimisation Guidance

---

Issue: 36

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021

## 1. MHRA update: Azithromycin in the Management of COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) Positive Patients. ([Link](#))

It is now recommended that azithromycin should NOT be used in the management of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in hospitalised patients unless there are additional indications for which its use remains appropriate. **Within primary care** the use of azithromycin and other antimicrobials, specifically in the treatment of COVID-19 infection, should be solely within the context of a trial. Please see link above for more details.

## 2. NICE Guideline: COVID-19 Rapid guideline: Vitamin D (NG187) ([Link](#))

In collaboration with Public Health England and the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, NICE have published rapid guidance on vitamin D in relation to COVID-19. It is for adults, young people and children in hospital and community settings. There is advice regarding routine winter supplementation for adults and children and the evidence around supplementation in association with COVID.

## 3. MHRA Lithium update ([Link](#))

Priadel® 200mg and 400mg tablets remain available to order from wholesalers.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have agreed a revised price for Priadel® 200mg and 400mg tablets with Essential Pharma. Essential Pharma have issued a legally binding commitment with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to continue to supply Priadel® tablets for a minimum of five years to the UK, thereby securing the long-term availability of this crucial medicine. Further information can be found here ([Link](#)).

Clinicians across all healthcare settings are advised that there is no longer a need to implement system wide switching of patients from Priadel® tablets to an alternative lithium carbonate preparation.

- All patients who are prescribed lithium treatment should now continue to be managed in line with usual clinical practice underpinned by the relevant NICE guidance.

- Patients who have been switched to alternative brands of lithium should be given the option of switching back to Priadel® brand if they have experienced problems with the alternative brand of lithium.
- Essential Pharma have advised that ordering quotas will remain in place across wholesalers (based on historic demand) for the foreseeable future. Please note, quotas are reset on the 1st of each month.
- If pharmacies have insufficient supplies of Priadel® tablets and require stock urgently and cannot wait until the 1st of each month, please contact Movianto directly (tel: 01234 248 500 / e-mail: orders.UK@movianto.com). Please note, you will be required to create a Movianto account to obtain supplies.

**4. MHRA Drug Safety Update: Erythromycin: caution required due to cardiac risks (QT interval prolongation); drug interaction with rivaroxaban ([Link](#))**

Erythromycin has been associated with events secondary to QT interval prolongation such as cardiac arrest and ventricular fibrillation. Erythromycin should not be given to patients with a history of QT interval prolongation or ventricular cardiac arrhythmia, including torsades de pointes, or patients with electrolyte disturbances. A potential drug interaction between rivaroxaban and erythromycin resulting in increased risk of bleeding has also been identified.

**5. Public Health England Guidance: Safety of COVID-19 vaccines when given in pregnancy. 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021 ([Link](#))**

This advice provides information on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines when given in pregnancy. It is designed for health professionals to share with women who were vaccinated before they knew they were pregnant. There is no known risk with giving inactivated virus or bacterial vaccines or toxoids during pregnancy or whilst breast-feeding. However, the COVID-19 vaccines have not yet been tested in pregnancy, so it has been advised that until more information is available, pregnant women should not routinely have these vaccines.

*Prepared by Anita Bhardwaj, Sue Wakelin and Dr Emma Harris, on behalf of the*

*Hampshire and IoW CCGs Medicines Optimisation Teams*

*Previous bulletins can be found at:*

<https://gp-portal.westhampshireccg.nhs.uk/medicines/covid-19-medicines-information/covid-19-medicines-optimisation-bulletins/>