

Prescribing and Medicines Optimisation Guidance

Issue: 37

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1. DHSC: Vitamin D and Care Homes Guidance (15th January 2021) ([Link](#))

The Department of Health and Social Care have issued guidance for the provision of vitamin D supplements for people living in care homes. The Government will provide a free 4-month supply of daily vitamin D supplements (oral drops) for residents in residential and nursing care homes in England. This will be delivered directly to residential and nursing care homes from January 2021 onwards, as a one-off supply.

Each daily supplement will contain 10 micrograms (400 IU) of vitamin D. The vitamin D supplement provided will be in a liquid form and 2 drops is equivalent to 10 micrograms.

The guidance outlines the safety information that care home managers will need to check prior to offering the vitamin D supplement to residents. This includes

- Checking that the resident is not already taking a form of vitamin D (e.g. cholecalciferol, ergocalciferol, a combination product or an OTC supplement product)
- Checking that the resident does not have a medical condition where vitamin would be unsafe to administer. This includes
 - those under the care of a renal, endocrinology or cancer specialist
 - people with high vitamin D levels
 - people with kidney stones (now or in the past)
 - people with too much parathyroid hormone (hyperparathyroidism),
 - people with cancer (some cancers can lead to high calcium levels)
 - people with severe kidney disease
 - people with a rare illness called sarcoidosis
- Checking for allergies
- Checking for swallowing difficulties

The guidance clearly states that if a care home manager is unsure about these factors, further advice should be sought from the resident's GP or health care

professional (HCP) *at the resident's next appointment*, before offering the supplement. It goes on to add that it is not necessary to contact the resident's GP or HCP about Vitamin D supplements, prior to their next appointment.

2. MHRA Drug Safety Update: Antiepileptic drugs in pregnancy: updated advice following comprehensive safety review. ([Link](#))

A review of the risks of major congenital malformations and of adverse neurodevelopmental outcomes for antiepileptic drugs by the Commission on Human Medicines has confirmed that lamotrigine (Lamictal) and levetiracetam (Keppra) are the safer of the medicines reviewed during pregnancy. This review was initiated in the context of the known harms of valproate in pregnancy, which should only be prescribed to women of childbearing potential if there is a pregnancy prevention programme in place. Clinicians should use this information when discussing treatment options with women with epilepsy at initiation and at routine recommended annual reviews and with women who are planning to become pregnant.

3. MHRA Drug Safety Update: SSRI/SNRI antidepressant medicines: small increased risk of postpartum haemorrhage when used in the month before delivery. ([Link](#))

SSRIs and SNRIs are known to increase bleeding risks due to their effect on platelet function. Data from observational studies suggest that the use of SSRI/SNRI antidepressants during the month before delivery may result in a small increased risk of postpartum haemorrhage. Prescribers should consider this risk in the context of an individual patient's bleeding and thrombotic risk assessment during the peripartum period and the benefits of antidepressants for the patient's mental health during this time.

4. MHRA Guidance: Valproate use by Women and Girls ([Link](#))

New versions of the patient card, patient booklet, and healthcare professional's booklet (dated November 2020) are now available. Please see the link above for further information and resources.

5. MHRA Guidance: Use of Medicines in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding ([Link](#))

This guidance signposts patients, healthcare professionals and developers of new medicines to advice and resources on medicines in pregnancy and breastfeeding and is supported by Safer Medicines in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Consortium.

6. SCAN Micro Guide update

Version 3.3 of the SCAN guidelines has been published. The Antimicrobial alerts folder has been updated to include the following MHRA alerts:

- Systemic and inhaled fluoroquinolones: small risk of heart valve regurgitation; consider other therapeutic options first in patients at risk
- Erythromycin: caution required due to cardiac risks (QT interval prolongation); drug interaction with rivaroxaban
- Erythromycin: update on known risk of infantile hypertrophic pyloric stenosis

The SCAN guidelines are available at: <https://viewer.microguide.global/SCAN/SCAN>

Micro Guide (SCAN) App download guidelines are also available here. [LINK](#)

7. MHRA :Fexofenadine now available to buy [link](#)

The MHRA has taken the decision to approve General Sales List (GSL) legal status for the Allevia 120mg tablets (fexofenadine) for the relief of symptoms associated with seasonal allergic rhinitis (hay fever) in adults and children aged 12 years and over.

8. NHSE&I : NHS Discharge Medicines Service – Essential Service: Toolkit for pharmacy staff in community, primary and secondary care [LINK](#)

This toolkit supports implementation of the NHS Discharge Medicines Service, which is being introduced as an essential service in all NHS community pharmacies from 15 February 2021. It sets out the shared responsibility and roles of community pharmacy teams, NHS trusts and PCNs. Section 3.5 refers to the importance of cross-sector working with PCN pharmacy teams and community pharmacy.

For COVID-19 vaccine related updates, please refer to the regular NHSE&I Primary Care Bulletins. Please click on this link to subscribe ([Link](#))

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/>