

Prescribing and Medicines Optimisation Guidance

Issue: 39

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1. MHRA publishes first report on adverse reactions to approved Covid-19 vaccines submitted via the Yellow Card Scheme. 5 February 2021 ([Link](#))

Following widespread use of the COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford University/AstraZeneca) across the UK, the vast majority of suspected adverse reaction reports so far confirm the safety profile seen in clinical trials. Most reports relate to injection site reactions (sore arm for example) and generalised symptoms such as a 'flu-like' illness, headache, chills, fatigue, nausea, fever, dizziness, weakness, aching muscles, and rapid heartbeat. Generally, these reactions are not associated with more serious illness and likely reflect an expected, normal immune response to the vaccines.

2. HRT reminder

Local gynaecology consultants have seen in the last year several cases of women with intact uterus who have been prescribed oestrogen-only hormone replacement therapy (HRT). This is a reminder of the need to prescribe a progestogen alongside oestrogen, where long term therapy is required in women with a uterus. A progestogen is added to reduce the risk of cystic hyperplasia of the endometrium and possible transformation to cancer. [Link](#)

Ongoing supply issues with HRT may have contributed to this situation.

3. Serious Supply Shortage Update – Fluoxetine extended to the end of March 2021 ([Link](#))

A Serious Shortage Protocol (SSP) was issued on in for the supply shortage of Fluoxetine 40mg capsules in January 2021. This has now been extended to the end of March. For patients with insufficient supplies, community pharmacists may supply fluoxetine 20mg capsules in accordance with the SSP for eligible patients. If the above option is not deemed appropriate, clinicians should consider prescribing an alternative formulation of fluoxetine.

4. Serious Supply Shortage Update – Levothyroxine 12.5mcg tablets ([Link](#))

A Serious Shortage Protocol (SSP) was issued for the supply shortage of Levothyroxine 12.5mcg tablets which are out of stock until early March 2021. Levothyroxine 25microgram tablets remain available and can support an uplift in demand.

For patients with insufficient supplies, community pharmacists may supply levothyroxine 25microgram tablets in accordance with the SSP for eligible patients. If the above option is not deemed appropriate, clinicians should consider prescribing:

- levothyroxine 25microgram tablets on alternate days (see supporting information below); or
- levothyroxine 25microgram/5ml oral solution.

Patients should be counselled regarding the switch in formulation at the point of dispensing.

Due to the long half-life of levothyroxine, alternate day dosing regimens may be appropriate. When considering this option, please ensure patients understand and are able to accommodate an alternate daily dosing regime and understand the risk of taking the medicine every day. Please inform the patient how to recognize and respond to signs of toxicity at the point of prescribing. The use of an aide-memoire or another reminder system to keep track of the days when they took their medicine may be helpful.

5. SCAN Guidelines update ([Link](#))

Recent major changes to the SCAN guidelines since November include:

- Suspected meningitis or suspected meningococcal disease - amended in line with NICE guideline ([link](#))
- Acute cough with respect to COVID-19 and treatment options ([link](#))
- Acute Otitis Media ([link](#))

In addition to the SCAN website, the guidelines are available via an app. Instructions on how to download the Micro Guide (SCAN) App are available here. [LINK](#)

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

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Previous bulletins can be found at: <https://gp-portal.westhampshireccg.nhs.uk/medicines/covid-19-medicines-information/covid-19-medicines-optimisation-bulletins/>