

Prescribing and Medicines Optimisation Guidance

Issue: 50

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1. Public Health England: Meningococcal B vaccination. Information for healthcare practitioners. ([Link](#))

In September 2015, a vaccine against meningococcal B disease (MenB) was added to the childhood immunisation programme as part of the routine schedule in England. This document provides further information for healthcare practitioners regarding the immunisation against meningococcal B disease for infants aged from 2 months. The section on missed doses of Bexsero has been updated.

2. MHRA: Safety of macrolide antibiotics in pregnancy: a review of the epidemiological evidence. Published 28 June 2021. ([Link](#))

Of the 3 macrolides included in this review, the most experience of use in pregnancy is seen for erythromycin (>24,000 first trimester exposures). Only 2 of the 11 studies suggested an increased risk of major congenital or cardiovascular malformations. The number of first trimester exposures to azithromycin and clarithromycin are more moderate (>7,300 and >1,400, respectively)

The authors concluded that overall, the quality of observational data on the safety of maternal use of erythromycin, clarithromycin and azithromycin during early pregnancy is low. Furthermore, a biological mechanism for teratogenic effects has not been established.

The overarching findings of this review are that the available evidence is insufficient to confirm with certainty the presence or absence of a small increased risk of malformations or miscarriage when macrolides are taken in early pregnancy.

3. SPS: Choosing a suitable antidepressant for people with coronary heart disease (CHD). ([Link](#))

This provides a guide to the available options when choosing an antidepressant for the treatment of people with CHD, with links to relevant guidance and advice from the MHRA and NICE.

4. SPS: Choosing formulations of medicines for adults with swallowing difficulties. ([Link](#))

In this document, a process for choosing suitable formulations is described, following a stepwise approach, including use of licensed products where possible, whether tablet can be crushed or capsule opened, and deciding if medicine can be given with soft food or thickened fluid.

5. The green book update – chapter 14a (COVID -19) ([Link](#))

The COVID-19 chapter has been updated with clarification around the schedule following the emergence of the Delta variant, advice on cautions and contraindications, and co-administration advice. More evidence on vaccine effectiveness and mixed schedules has also been added.

6. MHRA safety warning - Herbal products containing Butterbur

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has been made aware of a magazine article which promotes the use of Butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*) for the treatment of hay fever, or to treat migraines, asthma, chronic coughs and gastric ulcers. The MHRA advises patients not to take herbal products containing Butterbur to treat these conditions.

These are unlicensed herbal medicines that present a serious risk to public health, as they can cause liver toxicity, organ failure and other dangerous side-effects.

In January 2012, the MHRA published a safety alert ([link](#)) advising people not to take unlicensed Butterbur herbal products, following reports of Butterbur products being associated with cases of liver toxicity and the advice remains unchanged.

There is no guarantee that unlicensed herbal medicines meet quality, safety, efficacy, and patient information standards required in the UK. This can endanger the health and welfare of people who take them.

Patients taking herbal products containing Butterbur should be advised to stop using them immediately and seek advice from their GP or pharmacist if they have any concerns. Anyone can report any suspected side effects of herbal medicines via the Yellow Card scheme.

If you have any queries, please email MHRACustomerServices@mhra.gov.uk.

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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/>