

Prescribing and Medicines Optimisation Guidance

Issue: 110

Date: 16 December 2024

Safety guidance

1. SPS: Supporting safe use of adrenal crisis emergency management kits [LINK](#)

Treatment of adrenal crisis is time critical and relies on timely use of injectable hydrocortisone to prevent harm. The SPS resource discusses patient harm, use of emergency management kits, kit components, counselling and risk mitigation strategies. The recent NICE guideline Adrenal insufficiency: identification and management (2024) [LINK](#) outlines who the kits should be supplied to, and the quantity for supply.

Local guidance

2. PERT advice for adult patients that DO NOT have Cystic Fibrosis [LINK](#)

Guidance for the management of patients affected by the national shortage of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapies has been developed with local specialists in secondary care. Oxford Pharmacy stores are holding supplies of Pangrol, an equivalent of Creon from Germany, that community pharmacies in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight can obtain. Further information for prescribers and community pharmacies can be found in this guidance.

National guidance

3. Government ban on puberty suppressing hormones made indefinite

The Government has announced that the existing emergency measures banning the sale and supply of puberty suppressing hormones for the treatment of gender dysphoria or incongruence in under-18s have been made indefinite. [A letter outlining updated information for primary care can be found here.](#)

NHS patients who are already receiving these medicines for gender dysphoria or incongruence can continue to access them, as can patients receiving the medicines for other uses.

For children and young people whose access to puberty suppressing hormones have been discontinued (for example, prescriptions from non-UK prescribers) and are not on the waiting list of children's gender services, NHS England will offer a targeted support from local NHS mental health services in England. Children, young people and their families can access this service,

which is being coordinated through NHS Arden and GEM Commissioning Support Unit, by contacting agem.cyp-gnrss@nhs.net or calling 03001316775 and selecting option 3.

4. NHSE Commissioning recommendations following the national assessment of blood glucose and ketone meters, testing strips and lancets [LINK](#)

The guidance now includes an updated table of recommendations. For the majority of patients with type 2 diabetes, that do not require additional functionality, eight meters and strips are equally recommended. For those with type 1 or ketosis prone type 2 diabetes, five options are recommended. The guidance includes pictures and details of products.

5. DHSC/NHSE Influenza season 2024/25: Use of antiviral medicines [LINK](#)

UKHSA surveillance data indicates that influenza is circulating in the community. While some areas continue to see low levels of influenza activity, surveillance indicators show that activity is increasing in all levels of care and activity is expected to increase further over the coming weeks. The most notable changes have been a significant increase in influenza positivity through laboratory surveillance and an increase in acute respiratory infection outbreaks with a marked increase in those with influenza reported, principally in care homes.

Prescribers working in primary care may now prescribe and community pharmacists may now supply antiviral medicines (oseltamivir and zanamivir) for the prophylaxis and treatment of influenza at NHS expense. This is in accordance with NICE guidance, and Schedule 2 to the National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts (Prescription of drugs etc) Regulations 2004), commonly known as the Grey List or Selected List Scheme (SLS).

Antiviral medicines may be prescribed for patients in clinical at-risk groups as well as anyone at risk of severe illness and/or complications from influenza if not treated.

6. DHSC: Folic acid supplementation: advice to health professionals [LINK](#)

Currently, guidelines recommend that women who could become pregnant take a daily supplement of 400 micrograms of folic acid before conception and up until the 12th week of pregnancy to reduce the risk of neural tube defect (NTD) - affected pregnancies. This advice will continue following the fortification of flour with folic acid. Fortification of flour with folic acid is intended as a population measure to support, not replace, current supplementation advice for individuals.

The chief medical officers, chief nursing officers and chief midwifery officers for the UK, are writing to healthcare professionals to ask that they continue to promote the importance of folic acid supplementation directly to women of child-bearing age through existing communication channels, including face to face interactions. [LINK](#)

7. SPS: Vitamin B12 deficiency: treatment during pregnancy - update [LINK](#)

Updated webpage, based on recommendations in NICE NG239, highlights intramuscular hydroxocobalamin and oral cyanocobalamin are treatment options. Prescribers should seek urgent advice from a haematologist when treating vitamin B12 deficiency anaemia during pregnancy.

8. UKHSA: Vaccine safety and adverse events following immunisation: the green book, chapter 8 [LINK](#)

Changes include new paragraphs defining anxiety related adverse events, new section on hypotonic-hyporesponsive episodes, extensive re-write of the anaphylaxis section, and changes

to managing common vaccine-induced adverse events to include management of fever following Bexsero.

9. UKHSA: Vaccine update: issue 351, October 2024 [LINK](#)

Some of the topics covered include prenatal pertussis vaccination coverage in England, information on the changes to the ImmForm website address, details of Christmas 2024 and New Year 2025 vaccine deliveries, and routine and non-routine vaccine supply.

NICE guidelines

10. Asthma pathway (BTS, NICE, SIGN) – guidance (NG244) [LINK](#)

This pathway brings together recommendations on diagnosing, monitoring and managing asthma in adults, young people and children, as well as managing difficult and severe asthma and acute asthma attacks.

11. Asthma: diagnosis, monitoring and chronic asthma management (BTS, NICE, SIGN) – guidance (NG245) [LINK](#)

Guideline covers diagnosing, monitoring and managing asthma in adults, young people and children. It does not cover managing severe asthma or acute asthma attacks. Algorithms for diagnosis and pharmacological management, plus patient decision aid are provided.

Other

12. Polypharmacy Action Learning Set- Wessex, Oxford, West of England & SW [LINK](#)

The Polypharmacy Action Learning Set (ALS) is an evidence-based learning model developed by Health Innovation Wessex (formerly Wessex AHSN) in partnership with Health Education England. These sessions are for GPs and primary care clinicians.

The action learning sets are delivered by knowledgeable, experienced speakers. They provide evidence and resources that empower you as a practitioner to take the pragmatic approach to prescribing. They recognise the challenges in primary care, whether it be time pressures, workload, complexity, multi-clinician inputs, or QOF, and yet, are able to provide practical advice for how you can realistically review medications and adapt your own approach to prescribing.

**Prepared by Anita Bhardwaj, Sue Wakelin and Dr Emma Harris
NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB Medicines Optimisation Team**

Local medicines optimisation teams can be contacted via their generic team mailbox: See [LINK](#)

Previous bulletins can be found hosted on the ICS website here: [LINK](#)