



14 December 2022

## **Medicine Supply Alert Notice**

### **Antibiotics for the treatment of Group A Strep**

**Priority: Level 2\***

**Valid until: TBC**

#### **Issue**

1. Supplies of antibiotics for the treatment of Group A Strep have seen a surge in demand and may be temporarily in limited supply at certain wholesalers and pharmacies.
2. Supplies are available with manufacturers, and deliveries into wholesalers and pharmacies are being expedited and are expected in the coming days.
3. Guidance has been issued on what antibiotics can be used if first line treatment is not available and can be found at: [Group A streptococcus communications to clinicians](#). Public Health Scotland (PHS) and the Scottish Antimicrobial Prescribing Group (SAPG) support this guidance. In addition, SAPG are planning on issuing a further statement about antimicrobial prescribing in response to the current situation.

#### **Advice and Actions**

4. Where antibiotic therapy is required for the treatment of suspected Strep A infection, clinicians and local pharmacy teams should:
  - work together to understand the local availability of antibiotics and consider the clinical information published at [Group A streptococcus communications to clinicians](#) (see Additional Information section);
  - order antibiotic stocks in line with patient demand during this time and avoid ordering excessive quantities; and
  - note that, where possible, tablet and/or capsules (rather than liquids) should be prescribed to preserve stocks of liquid preparations.
5. If the formulation of antibiotic prescribed is unavailable clinicians and local pharmacy teams should:
  - consider prescribing an alternative form or strength of the antibiotic where appropriate, ensuring that the patient is not intolerant to any of the excipients in the alternative and is counselled on the appropriate dose (and volume) required (see Additional Information section).

6. If the antibiotic prescribed is unavailable and other formulations are unsuitable, clinicians and local pharmacy teams should:
- consider prescribing an alternative antibiotic, if the first line option is unavailable, taking into account any allergies or intolerances and referring to national guidance (see supporting information section); and
  - if the above options are not considered appropriate, seek advice from specialists on management options.

## **Additional Information**

### Clinical Information

7. UKHSA, in partnership with NHS England, has developed updated clinical guidance on the management of patients with Group A Strep, this can be found at [Group A streptococcus communications to clinicians](#). PHS and SAPG support this guidance. SAPG are planning on issuing a statement about antimicrobial prescribing in response to the current situation.

### Guidance on using solid oral dosage form antibiotics in children:

8. Children 5 years and above may be able to swallow tablets/capsules. Where children are unable to swallow oral solid dose forms, the NHS Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) has provided advice on how to give doses by dispersing or crushing tablets, or opening capsules. Use in this way is outside the product licence ('off-label'). Guidance on using solid oral dosage form antibiotics in children can be found [here](#).

### Advice for the public

9. The public have been advised to be alert for symptoms of illnesses caused by GAS and to seek medical advice from their GP or out-of-hours doctor to help prevent the infection becoming serious. Guidance for the public is available at: [Streptococcus A \(Strep A\) | NHS inform](#).

## **Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) website**

10. The UK Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in conjunction with SPS have launched an online Medicines Supply Tool, which provides up to date information about medicine supply issues.
11. To access the online Medicines Supply Tool you need to register with the [SPS website](#). Registration for access to the website is available to UK healthcare professionals and organisations providing NHS healthcare. The tool is located under the Planning tab and then click on the Medicines Supply option.
12. We encourage prescribers, pharmacy professionals, and pharmacy procurement leads in Scotland to register with the SPS website and use its Medicine Supply Tool in order to stay up to date concerning medicines supply disruptions.
13. Please be aware that while medicines supply issues will appear on the SPS website, some of the recommended actions may not always be appropriate / relevant within the Scottish context.

## **Enquiries**

14. Enquiries from Health Boards or healthcare professionals should be directed in the first instance to [PharmacyTeam@gov.scot](mailto:PharmacyTeam@gov.scot) (primary care) or [NSS.NHSSMedicineShortages@nhs.scot](mailto:NSS.NHSSMedicineShortages@nhs.scot) (secondary care).