



30 December 2022

Medicine Supply Alert Notice

Antibiotics for the treatment of Group A Strep - Update

Priority: Level 3

Valid until: TBC

Issue

1. Supplies of antibiotics for the treatment of Group A Strep have seen a surge in demand and may be in limited supply at certain wholesalers and pharmacies.
2. Supplies are available with manufacturers, and deliveries into wholesalers and pharmacies are being expedited.
3. **Alternative antibiotics remain available, however, due to the dynamic situation at present, some of these products may be intermittently unavailable. Please find further information [here](#).**
4. **Eight Serious Shortage Protocols (SSPs) have been issued on 15th and 16th December 2022. Five SSPs (SSP 043 – 047) were updated on 23rd December 2022.**
5. Updated interim clinical 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.

Advice and Actions

6. Where a prescription for phenoxymethylpenicillin is presented and cannot be fulfilled community pharmacists should:
 - **supply an alternative phenoxymethylpenicillin preparation where available and according to the products specified in SSPs 040 - 042;**
 - **if SSPs 040- 042 cannot be utilised, refer to SSPs 043 - 047, to consider supply of an alternative antibiotic as specified;**
 - **ensure the patient's age, weight (where appropriate), cautions and exclusion criteria are taken into account when considering using an SSP; and**
 - **ensure patients/parents/carers are counselled regarding any switch in formulation or medicine including the appropriate dose of the substitute product;**
 - **ensure the patient's prescriber and/or GP practice is notified when supplying a patient in accordance with any of these SSPs; and**
 - **if the patient is deemed ineligible or does not consent to receive an alternative product via the SSP, they should be promptly referred to the prescriber.**

7. Where SSPs cannot be utilised, and patients are referred back to their prescriber, clinicians should:
- consider prescribing an alternative antibiotic, if the first line option is unavailable, taking into account any allergies, and referring to national guidance (see supporting information below); and
 - if the above options are not considered appropriate, seek advice from specialists on management options.

Additional Information

Clinical Information

8. UKHSA and NHSE have developed updated clinical guidance on the management of patients with Group A Strep, this can be found here: [Group A streptococcus communications to clinicians](#). PHS and SAPG support this guidance.
9. **For prescriptions of phenoxymethylpenicillin for longer than 10 days, only erythromycin can be supplied via an SSP where needed. Where erythromycin is not available, patients will need to be referred to prescribers to consider alternative products for long-term prophylaxis conditions.**
10. **Please find further information on SSPs [here](#). Please note SSP 043 – 047 were updated on 23rd December 2022 to:**
- **include azithromycin as one of the alternative antibiotics that can be supplied instead of phenoxymethylpenicillin where appropriate and available as above; and**
 - **amend the dosing regimen for erythromycin in line with continued expert advice and BNF guidance.**
11. **The Royal Pharmaceutical Society have created an infographic providing an illustration of serious shortage protocol supply options for antibiotics, this can be found [here](#). This has not yet been updated to take account of the inclusion of azithromycin.**

Guidance on using solid oral dosage form antibiotics in children:

12. Where children are unable to swallow oral solid dose forms, SPS have provided advice on how to give doses by dispersing or crushing tablets, or opening capsules. Use in this way is outside the product license ('off-label'). Guidance on using solid oral dosage form antibiotics in children can be found [here](#).

Links and references:

- [NHSBSA Serious Shortage Protocols](#)
- [SPC amoxicillin](#)
- [BNF interactions amoxicillin](#)
- [BNF side effects amoxicillin](#)
- [SPC clarithromycin](#)
- [BNF interactions clarithromycin](#)
- [BNF side effects clarithromycin](#)
- [SPC flucloxacillin](#)

- [BNF interactions flucloxacillin](#)
- [BNF side effects flucloxacillin](#)
- [SPC azithromycin](#)
- [BNF interactions azithromycin](#)
- [BNF side effects azithromycin](#)
- [SPC cefalexin](#)
- [BNF interactions cefalexin](#)
- [BNF side effects cefalexin](#)
- [SPC co-amoxiclav](#)
- [BNF interactions co-amoxiclav \(as amoxicillin and clavulanate\)](#)
- [BNF side effects co-amoxiclav](#)
- [SPC erythromycin](#)
- [BNF interactions erythromycin](#)
- [BNF side effects erythromycin](#)

Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) website

13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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

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