

Deprescribing: Limited Evidence List and Stop List



November 2020

The Northern Ireland Department of Health (NI DH) and Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) do not support prescribing of products on the Health Service where there is insufficient evidence of effectiveness. **Over £7,000,000 was spent last year in Northern Ireland on prescriptions for items on the 'Limited Evidence list' and 'Stop list'.** As the Health Service only has a limited pot of money, payment for certain items on prescription may be considered a waste of scarce resources that could be better spent on evidence-based treatments. In addition to the cost of the product, there is significant cost associated with producing prescriptions, e.g. GP and practice staff time.

Medicines on the **Limited Evidence List** should be reviewed to ensure that they are used only in the approved circumstances (see page 2).

Prescribing of products on the **Stop List** is not supported by HSCB. Some of these products may be purchased by the patient from community pharmacies or supermarkets.

Limited Evidence List

Products on this list must not be routinely prescribed and should be reviewed to ensure that they are used only in the approved circumstances.

- Fentanyl immediate release
- Lidocaine patches
- Liothyronine
- Methocarbamol
- Omacor[®] / Maxepa[®]
- Quinine
- Aliskiren
- Trimipramine
- Vitamins – multivitamins, ascorbic acid, Forceval[®], Ketovite[®], vitamins BPC, Vioptal[®], cod liver oil.

Stop List

Prescribing of these products is not supported by the HSCB.

- Probiotics, e.g. VSL#3[®], Vivomixx[®], lactobacillus
- Bio-Oil[®]
- Preparations for managing blepharitis, e.g. Blephaclean[®] wipes, Blephagel[®] and Blephasol[®]
- CoEnzyme Q10
- Colic products, e.g. Infacol[®] or Dentinox[®]
- Comfort milks (Aptamil[®], Cow & Gate[®] and SMA[®]) or Colief[®] drops
- Co-proxamol
- Cubitan[®]
- Dosulepin
- Eye supplements, e.g. Icaps[®], Ocuville[®], Macushield[®], PreserVision[®], Viteyes[®]
- Gamolenic acid / evening primrose oil
- Glucosamine containing products
- Glucose preparations, e.g. Lift glucose Juice shots[®], Lift Glucose tablets[®], Dextro energy[®], Lucozade tablets[®], Glucotabs[®] and Glucojuice[®] **UPDATED**
- Gluten free non-staple foods, e.g. biscuits, sausage rolls
- Green-lipped mussel (Pernaton gel[®])
- Naltrexone (low dose)
- Omega-3 fish oils, e.g. Eye Q[®] and Efalex[®]
- Rubefacients, e.g. Movelat gel/cream[®], Transvasin Heat Rub[®], Deep Heat Rub/spray[®] **UPDATED**
- Souvenaid[®]
- Spatone[®]

For a **List of Medicines for Minor Conditions and Self-limiting Illnesses** that are recommended to be purchased over the counter, refer to **OTC Medicines** on NI Formulary website <http://niformulary.hscni.net>

LIMITED EVIDENCE LIST

Products on this list must not be routinely prescribed and should be reviewed to ensure that they are used only in the approved circumstances.

Quinine	The MHRA advise that quinine is not a routine treatment for nocturnal leg cramps, and should only be used when cramps regularly disrupt sleep. Treatment should be interrupted every 3 months to reassess. Review tool is available on Primary care intranet .
Omacor® / Maxepa®	NICE advise that there is no evidence that omega-3 fatty acid compounds help to prevent cardiovascular disease, including following a myocardial infarction. Treatment should not be initiated in primary care, but rather under the direction of a specialist (cardiology or non-cardiology use). A review tool is available on the Primary care intranet .
Vitamins	E.g. Forceval, [®] multivitamins, ascorbic acid, Ketovite [®] , vitamins BPC, Vivioptal [®] , cod liver oil. Vitamins may be prescribed to prevent or treat deficiency, but NOT as dietary supplements. Patients should be given dietary advice instead. Refer to Northern Ireland Formulary for further guidance on prescribing of vitamins.
Lidocaine patches	The NICE guideline on neuropathic pain does not make a recommendation on the use of lidocaine patches as a treatment option, due to limited clinical evidence supporting its use. Lidocaine patches may be considered in post herpetic neuralgia if the patient is intolerant of first line systemic therapies or where they have been ineffective or are contra-indicated. A review audit is available on the Primary care intranet .
Liothyronine (including Armour® Thyroid and liothyronine combination products)	The majority of people with hypothyroidism can be managed with levothyroxine. However, a small proportion of patients treated with levothyroxine continue to suffer with symptoms despite adequate biochemical correction. For these people, liothyronine may be used on the recommendation of a Health Service endocrine specialist in secondary care — prescribers in primary care should not initiate liothyronine. Recommendations from private healthcare consultants to GPs to prescribe should not occur. Note: liothyronine is also indicated for patients with thyroid cancer, in preparation for radioiodine ablation, iodine scanning, or stimulated thyroglobulin test. A shared care guideline is available on the Interface Pharmacy website .
Methocarbamol	Methocarbamol is licensed as a short-term adjunct to the symptomatic treatment of acute musculoskeletal disorders associated with painful muscle spasms. It is currently listed in the BNF as 'less suitable for prescribing' as the evidence for its use in muscle spasm or spasticity is limited.
Fentanyl immediate release (IR) (tablets, lozenges, film, nasal spray)	IR fentanyl is licensed for the treatment of breakthrough pain in adults with cancer who are already receiving at least 60mg oral morphine daily or equivalent. Use in palliative care by a recognised multidisciplinary team professional is acceptable and appropriate patients should not have the medicine deprescribed at this point. The amount of IR fentanyl being prescribed however makes it likely that in many cases it is being used for other types of pain than cancer. IR fentanyl can cause addiction.
Trimipramine	The cost of trimipramine is significantly more expensive than other antidepressants. NICE CG90: Depression in Adults recommends selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) antidepressants first line medicines are indicated as they have a more favourable risk to benefit ratio compared to TCA. However, if a TCA is required, there are more cost-effective TCAs available.
Aliskiren	Aliskiren is not recommended for primary hypertension, due to insufficient clinical and cost-effectiveness data. Insufficient evidence of its effectiveness to determine its suitability for use in resistant hypertension. In addition, the MHRA has reported on a risk of adverse outcomes (hypotension, syncope, stroke, hyperkalaemia and change in renal function including acute renal failure) when aliskiren is combined with ACE inhibitors or angiotensin II receptor blockers, especially in patients with diabetes and those with impaired renal function. Aliskiren should therefore only be used if initiated and under review by secondary care.

STOP LIST

Prescribing of these products is not supported by the HSCB. Patients should be counselled accordingly and advised that some products on the Stop list may be purchased over the counter (OTC) as appropriate, if desired.

Products that can be purchased OTC

Product	Background and rationale
Gluten-Free Non-Staple Foods	Only staple foods should be supplied on prescription as per Coeliac UK and HSCB guidance . Items which are not consistent with healthy eating advice, such as biscuits, cakes, muffins, pasties, sausage rolls, should not be supplied on HS21 prescription. Further guidance is available on the Primary care intranet .
Infacol[®] or Dentinox[®] or Colief[®] drops	There is no good evidence that infantile colic is caused by excess intestinal gas. Therefore Infacol [®] or Dentinox [®] Colic Drops (simeticone) should not be prescribed, as evidence for these products is lacking. There is no good evidence that transient lactase deficiency either occurs, or that it could cause infantile colic. Hence there is no evidence to support prescribing of Colief [®] Drops. A Parents/Carers Information Leaflet for the Management of Babies with Colic is available in Patient Zone of the Northern Ireland Formulary.
Comfort Milk	There is no evidence to support prescribing of a partially hydrolysed, low-lactose formula (comfort formula) such as Aptamil Comfort [®] and Cow&Gate Comfort First [®] milks. Comfort milks are not on the ACBS list and therefore should not be prescribed on HS21 prescription. Refer to Primary Care Infant Feeding Guidelines for further information.
Supplements for Age-related Macular Degeneration	E.g. Icaps [®] , OcuVite [®] , Macushield [®] , PreserVision [®] , Viteyes [®] Evidence for effectiveness of supplements for AMD is weak. A HSCB letter was issued in February 2016 advising that supplements for AMD should not be prescribed on the Health Service. This advice is supported by optometrists in the HSCB Optometry Practice Newsletter .
Omega 3 Fatty Acids Products for brain power, etc.	E.g. EyeQ [®] and Efalex [®] Products containing omega-3 fatty acids, alone or in combination with other supplements are sometimes promoted for a range of neurological conditions including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism in children, but the evidence to support this is sparse.
Souvenaid[®]	There is some evidence that Souvenaid [®] may improve memory function in people in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease (treatment naïve people). However, trials were not able to show any effect on the ability to slow or prevent cognitive decline. The Alzheimer's Society issued a statement to say that patients would be better spending their money on regular exercise, as this is a far more effective way of reducing cognitive decline, and that NHS money would be better spent on other treatments for Alzheimer's disease. Souvenaid [®] is not on the ACBS list and therefore should not be prescribed on HS21 prescription.
Spatone[®]	The BNF recommends that the oral dose of elemental iron for iron deficiency is 100 to 200mg daily. Spatone[®] contains 5mg of ferrous iron per sachet and is therefore inadequate for the treatment of proven iron deficiency. If iron supplementation is indicated a full therapeutic dose should be used. Refer to Northern Ireland Formulary for further guidance on prescribing of oral iron.
Bio-Oil[®]	This product is marketed for improvement of the appearance of scars, stretch marks and uneven skin tone, but availability of large randomised controlled trials (RCTs) is lacking. Bio-Oil is not on the ACBS list and therefore should not be prescribed on HS21 prescription.
Preparations for blepharitis	E.g. Blephaclean [®] , Blephagel [®] , Blephasol [®] Refer to Treatment of Blepharitis patient information leaflet in Northern Ireland Formulary website for tips on how to control or manage blepharitis.

STOP LIST

Green Lipped Mussel (GLM) (Pernaton Gel®)	GLM is a source of omega fatty acids which has been used as an adjunctive treatment in the symptomatic management of osteoarthritis, but there is currently limited evidence of efficacy. There is no evidence to suggest that GLM is effective for rheumatoid arthritis.
Glucose preparations	E.g. Lift glucose Juice shots®, Lift Glucose tablets®, Dextro energy®, Lucozade tablets®, Glucotabs® and Glucojuice® These products should not be prescribed. Patients can purchase glucose preparations or use alternatives to treat their hypo, e.g. jelly babies. Refer to Northern Ireland Formulary for PIL on management of 'hypos'. Glucose preparations are not on the ACBS list and therefore should not be prescribed on HS21 prescription.
Glucosamine and Chondroitin	NICE do not recommend prescribing glucosamine or chondroitin for osteoarthritis as evidence of benefit is limited. This advice is reflected in the Northern Ireland Formulary and a HSCB letter on glucosamine sent out in Oct 2010.
Gamolenic Acid / Evening Primrose Oil	Gamolenic acid is found in evening primrose oil which was previously available for the treatment of atopic eczema and mastalgia before the product licences were withdrawn in 2002 due to lack of sufficient efficacy data. No large trials are available to confirm its efficacy for pre-menstrual syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis or multiple sclerosis.
Cubitan®	Cubitan® is a high protein, high energy nutritional supplement for the dietary management of patients with chronic wounds. It is not on the ACBS list and therefore should not be prescribed on HS21 prescription.
Probiotics	ACBS recently removed VSL#3® and Vivomixx® from the Drug Tariff as a review of the evidence did not sufficiently demonstrate that the products are clinically effective. There are therefore no indications where probiotics are recommended for prescribing within the HSC.
Co-enzyme Q10	NICE guideline CG181 states: "Do not offer coenzyme Q10 to increase adherence to statin treatment." Studies which evaluate the effect of CoQ10 in improving adherence to statins are currently lacking which is why NICE do not recommend its use.
Rubefacients	E.g. Movelat gel/cream®, Transvasin Heat Rub®, Deep Heat Rub/spray® There is limited evidence that rubefacients work. The BNF says that the evidence does not support the use of rubefacients in short- or long-term muscle pain. In addition, NICE CG177 states that rubefacients should not be offered to treat osteoarthritis. Rubefacients can be bought over-the-counter from a pharmacy or supermarket.
Products that are not available to purchase OTC	
Naltrexone (low dose)	Low dose naltrexone (3mg to 4.5mg daily) is an unlicensed treatment. It has been used anecdotally to improve some symptoms of multiple sclerosis, but evidence to support its use is lacking. Refer to HSCB letter (January 2017) for further information. GPs should not start new patients on this treatment. Existing patients should be reviewed and treatment stopped if not beneficial to the patient. Where there is any uncertainty, the initiating specialist should be consulted.
Dosulepin	NICE includes dosulepin in its 'do not do' recommendation because it has a high chance of causing heart problems, is toxic in overdose and there are other anti-depressants available which are safer to use. Dosulepin should not be initiated in primary care for any indication and existing patients should be reviewed for suitability for switching to a safer agent. This may require consultation with a specialist. Dosulepin should not be stopped abruptly unless serious side effects have occurred. Refer to Medicines Management March 2018 newsletter for further information.
Co-proxamol	Co-proxamol was withdrawn from the UK market in 2007 due to safety concerns. All use in the UK is now on an unlicensed basis. An alternative analgesic should be prescribed if appropriate.

This newsletter has been produced for GPs and pharmacists by the Regional Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team. If you have any queries or require further information on the contents of this newsletter, please contact one of the Pharmacy Advisors in your local HSCB office:

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