

# COVID-19 Medicines Update

April 2020



**Inhalers-** At present in the UK there is significant demand in the supply chain for Respiratory Inhaler products and this is leading to wholesalers suffering from out of stock situations.

This is not a Coronavirus related supply issue but is linked to increased demand. Demand is reported for certain inhalers to be up by 400% from usual business.

We appeal to all Health Care Professionals involved in prescribing inhalers to help maintain supply by continuing to write **monthly** repeat prescriptions rather than writing a prescription for several months.

BTS have produced a useful document available on the MMB website that provides information on alternate products should a switch be required.

<http://www.elmmb.nhs.uk/resources/assets/attachment/full/0/21073.pdf>

**High Risk Drug Monitoring-** Guidance is now available detailing suggested monitoring requirements in primary care for high risk drugs. <http://www.elmmb.nhs.uk/resources/assets/attachment/full/0/21072.pdf> .

Work is on-going to confirm the monitoring requirement for other drugs not covered by this guidance.

**Ibuprofen/NSAIDs-** There have been some reports of possible adverse effects of the use of NSAIDs in acute respiratory tract infections which has led to suggestions to use paracetamol preferentially for fever/pain in such situations. There is currently no evidence that the acute use of NSAIDs causes an increased risk of developing COVID-19 or of developing a more severe COVID-19 disease.

When patients, carers or healthcare professionals are starting treatment for fever and/or pain in patients (adults or children) with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, all treatment options should be considered and selected based on the greatest benefit compared to potential harms using each medicine's product information. If used, the lowest effective dose of NSAID should be used for the shortest period required to control symptoms. This is in line with the European Medicines Agency (EMA) statement on the 18th March 2020 (European Medicines Agency, 2020).

**Reducing Medicine Wastage -** The legislation does not currently allow for medicines to be repurposed and any medicines that belong to individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are dealt with as infectious clinical waste. In order preserve the national supply chain, please do not stockpile any medicines in any setting, including prescribing 'just in case' packs for care homes.

A COVID-19 Homely Remedy Policy has just been approved for local use which will help ensure care home residents have timely access to medicines if required.

<http://www.elmmb.nhs.uk/resources/assets/attachment/full/0/21076.pdf>

**For further information, please contact the Medicines Management Teams on  
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