

# Capsaicin cream supply issues & Prescribing of Rubefacients

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## Capsaicin cream supply issues

Both strengths of Capsaicin cream 0.025% and 0.075% are out of stock for several months. **Prescribers are advised to identify patients currently prescribed all strengths of Capsaicin cream and remove it from patients' prescriptions and to consider the following actions:**

### Capsaicin cream 0.075% (Axsain®) licensed for neuropathic pain:

- Oral therapies such as amitriptyline, duloxetine, gabapentin or pregabalin are recommended as initial treatment for neuropathic pain. Clinicians should review patients and where appropriate oral treatment options should be discussed and considered by the patient.
- **In cases where patients are unwilling to try or cannot tolerate oral agents, over the counter products containing counter irritants (e.g. menthol, camphor) may be considered. The patient should be advised to seek further advice from the community pharmacist and purchase an appropriate product.**

### Capsaicin cream 0.025% (Zacin®) for osteoarthritis:

- NICE guidance only supports the use of Capsaicin cream 0.025% as an adjunct to core treatments for knee or hand osteoarthritis.
- For knee or hand osteoarthritis, clinicians should review patients and ensure that first line options such as Paracetamol have been considered.
- **Capsaicin cream 0.025% should not be prescribed for general musculoskeletal pain e.g. back pain.**

## Prescribing of Rubefacients or Heat Rubs

- Heat rubs/rubefacients are preparations that produce a warm, reddening effect on skin when patients rub them in, due to increased blood flow. Examples include Algesal®, Deep Heat®, Movelat®.
- The British National Formulary says that the evidence does not support the use of rubefacients in short- or long-term muscle pain. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) states that rubefacients should not be offered to treat osteoarthritis.
- **NHS England advises that heat rubs/rubefacients should not be prescribed but should be bought Over the Counter (OTC) where patients still wish to use them.**
- They are available to purchase cheaply from pharmacies and other retail outlets such as supermarkets, convenience or discount stores from as little as £1.

For further information, please contact the Medicines Management Team on  
01254 282087 (BwD CCG) or 01282 644807 (EL CCG)