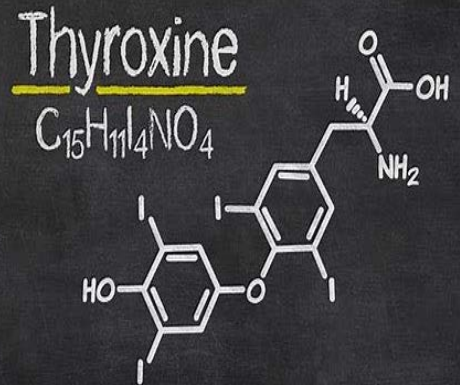


## Levothyroxine: new prescribing advice for patients who experience symptoms on switching between different levothyroxine products.

September 2021



The MHRA has received reports of patients experiencing adverse events on switching between different levothyroxine products. The MHRA has conducted a review of the available data and sought advice from the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) as to whether any regulatory action is needed to minimise the risk of adverse events on switching between different levothyroxine products.

The underlying causes for the symptoms experienced by patients switching between levothyroxine products are generally unclear. Potential causative factors could include:

- gastrointestinal comorbidities potentially affecting levothyroxine absorption
- concomitant use of medication reducing gastric acidity, which can also affect levothyroxine absorption
- very low thyroid reserve
- intolerance or allergy to an excipient in a particular brand
- specific genotypes relating to thyroid hormone synthesis or thyroid receptor function

For the most part, the symptoms experienced on switching levothyroxine tablet formulations could indicate the need for dose adjustment. However, some patients experience symptoms despite thyroid function testing showing them as biochemically euthyroid. These symptoms experienced by a minority of patients are acknowledged in [UK professional guidelines](#).

**These guidelines note that although generic prescribing of levothyroxine is appropriate for the vast majority of patients, in rare cases a patient may require a specific levothyroxine brand to be prescribed.**

### Advice for healthcare professionals:

- **Generic prescribing of levothyroxine remains appropriate for the majority of patients and the licensing of these generic products is supported by bioequivalence testing.**
- **If a patient reports symptoms after changing their levothyroxine product, check compliance including that the medication is being taken at the same time every morning 30-60mins before food and consider testing thyroid function.**
- **If a patient is persistently symptomatic after switching levothyroxine products and is compliant with taking their medication then consider consistently prescribing a specific levothyroxine product known to be well tolerated by the patient (irrespective of whether they are biochemically euthyroid or have evidence of abnormal thyroid function).**

**We are liaising with community pharmacy colleagues to ensure that when clinically indicated patients are maintained on the same brand/manufacturer of levothyroxine.**

For further information, please contact the Medicines Management Teams on 01254 282862 or email

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