



- **Vitamin D**

Vitamin D has had a high profile in the media recently, as the Chief Medical Officer for England Dame Sally Davies is to contact health professionals to highlight the need for vitamin D supplements in at-risk groups. See this summary on the NHS Choices website.

<http://www.nhs.uk/news/2012/01January/Pages/vitamin-d-medical-advice-and-supplements.aspx>

This DH leaflet gives further information and advises on diet, lifestyle measures and supplementation for those considered at high risk of deficiency.

http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_111302.pdf

Women and children participating in the Healthy Start initiative can get free supplements containing vitamin D. The women's supplements provide 10µg/day, and the children's vitamin drops 7.5µg/day www.healthystart.nhs.uk. Those not eligible for Healthy Start can be advised to purchase supplements over-the-counter.

NHS Northamptonshire is currently finalising comprehensive guidance on vitamin D, including treatment for deficiency and advice for those with "insufficiency". That document is likely to recommend that whilst treatment for deficiency should be prescribed on the NHS, supplementation for insufficiency or for those at risk of deficiency should be purchased over-the-counter. This is in line with our commissioning policy that vitamin supplements should not be prescribed at NHS expense and remains our current position. If Dame Sally Davies advises otherwise we will clearly review this stance.

We hope to release the full Northamptonshire vitamin D guidance shortly.

- **Epistatus**

We have been alerted to the fact that the oral syringes supplied with Epistatus (midazolam buccal liquid) were changed recently by the manufacturer, Special Products, to measure volumes up to 1.5mL (15mg) rather than 1mL (10mg). This could potentially result in patients being inadvertently overdosed if the users are unaware of the change. The outer packaging is the same and the syringes are not significantly different in appearance.

Subsequently, due to an outcry from epilepsy nurses, they have now been changed back to a 1ml syringe. However there may still be 1.5ml syringe-containing packs in the supply chain.

There is the potential that, because both syringes lock out at the maximum volume, in an emergency situation carers administering the drug may be used to drawing up a whole syringe volume to give 10mg and may not actually check the volume measured on the syringe. Practices are advised to contact any patients / carers prescribed Epistatus to check that they are aware.

- **Generic pioglitazone – licensing issues**

Lloyd's Pharmacy Superintendent has issued advice to their stores that generic pioglitazone made by Consilient Health does not have a license for use in combination with metformin and therefore pharmacists should ask practices to switch to Actos.

This issue was reviewed by NPAG in December 2011 and they have approved this off license use of generic pioglitazone in Northamptonshire with the support of the diabetes consultants.

See NPAG bullets [NPAG bullets Dec 2011](#)

We will be writing to Lloyds Pharmacy Superintendent and local stores to reinforce this local agreement.

GPs are advised not to prescribe by brand following such requests.

- **New generic salmeterol inhaler (Neuvent) and soya or peanut allergy**

There is a warning in the SPC that 'Neuvent® CFC-free inhaler contains soya lecithin and is contraindicated in patients who have soya or peanut allergies. A small proportion of those using salmeterol inhalers will be known to be allergic to peanuts or soya products, and they may be unintentionally given the new generic product in response to a generic prescription for salmeterol inhaler. To avoid the risk of this they are probably best switched to inhaled formoterol. An alternative approach would be to use branded prescribing, but this does allow the possibility they may be unwittingly changed to generic salmeterol later.

- **Correction to "Asthma Stepping Down Guidance"**

An error has been highlighted on the "Asthma Stepping Down Guidance" sent out on the 20th December. Step 2 (adults) should state *Budesonide DPI e.g. "Easyhaler Budesonide" 100microg 2p (not 1p) BD*.

The updated version is on Pathfinder and the Intranet.

This edition is also available on HNN (Health Network Northants)

<http://www.northants.nhs.uk/Display/Dynamic.jsp?topid=14070&lhsid=514&oid=2854¤tid=2854>

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