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Bite Size Prescribing News

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Rotherham
Clinical Commissioning Group

Alginate Supply problems

Currently there are global supply problems with the active ingredient Sodium Alginate that is used in Acidex Advance, Gaviscon and Peptac. This is due to the yield of batches from the only supplier and it is estimated that all the different brands and products could go in and out of stock over the next 10 to 12 weeks.

If patients are unable to get a supply of Acidex Advance, then the options are:

- Issue a one-off prescription generic “[Sodium alginate 500mg/5ml / Potassium bicarbonate 100mg/5ml oral suspension sugar free](#)”
 - This will allow Pharmacies to dispense either flavour of Acidex Advance or Gaviscon Advance
- Issue “Peptac” or generic “[Alginate raft-forming oral suspension sugar free](#)”
 - This is currently in stock – however supplies may run out
 - This may require a larger volume and contains more sodium, so not suitable for all patients. i.e. pregnancy, sodium restricted diets
- Consider asking the patient to purchase “self-care” products over the counter
- Consider a short course of a low dose PPI such as lansoprazole 15mg OD.
 - DO NOT place this on repeat

Please DO NOT:

- Bulk switch
- Change to “Gaviscon”
- Use tablets or OTC products
- Leave PPIs on repeat

GLP-1 receptor agonists: reports of diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) when concomitant insulin was rapidly reduced or discontinued.

Although this is not a newly discovered side effect, due to a recent incident in secondary care, we would like to remind clinicians that serious and life-threatening cases of diabetic ketoacidosis have been reported in patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus on a combination of a glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonist and insulin. Particularly after discontinuation or rapid dose reduction of concomitant insulin.

Healthcare professionals are advised that dose reductions of insulin should be done in a stepwise manner with careful blood glucose self-monitoring, particularly when GLP-1 receptor agonist therapy is initiated. Patients should be informed of the risk factors for and signs and symptoms of diabetic ketoacidosis, and advised to seek immediate medical attention if these develop.

Pregabalin (Lyrica): findings of safety study on risks during pregnancy

The MHRA has detailed ([here](#)) findings from a new study suggesting that pregabalin may slightly increase the risk of major congenital malformations if used in pregnancy. Clinicians are advised that patients should continue to use effective contraception during treatment and avoid use in pregnancy unless clearly necessary.

New Menopause and HRT guidance

A new menopause and HRT guide is available in the top tips section of the website. The guidance goes through clinical diagnosis, symptoms and treatment options.

Change to guidelines for Iron deficiency anaemia

<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/anaemia-iron-deficiency/management/management/>

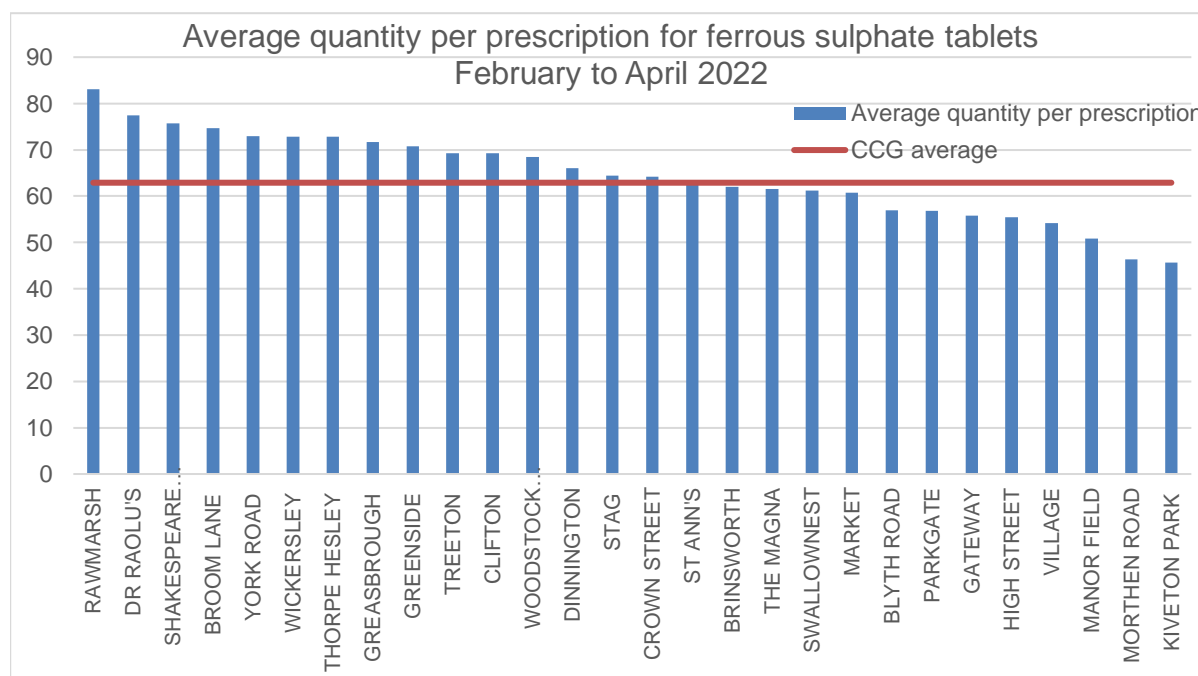
The NICE Clinical Knowledge summaries has recently been updated and references 2021 British Society of Gastroenterology guidelines for the management of iron deficiency anaemia in adults. <https://gut.bmj.com/content/70/11/2030>

“We recommend that the initial treatment of IDA should be with **one tablet per day of ferrous sulphate**, fumarate or gluconate. If not tolerated, a reduced dose of one tablet every other day, alternative oral preparations or parenteral iron should be considered (*evidence quality—medium, consensus—92%, statement strength—strong*).”

This will provide many quality advantages:

- Reduced gastrointestinal side effect such as black stools and constipation
 - Better compliance from patients
 - Evidence suggests 10-20% stop from side-effects
 - Fewer patients requesting a swap to alternative form
 - Alternate days of ferrous sulphate should be trialled first
 - Less laxatives needed to counteract constipation
- Decreased interactions with other medication & food
 - Suggest a timing away from morning medication (e.g. levothyroxine & calcium) & milk containing drinks and meals. Having with orange juice may improve absorption (vitamin C)

Currently at Rotherham GP practices there are more than 6,000 patients with repeat templates for Iron Supplements, at a cost of £147,000 a year, with the average quantity on a ferrous sulphate prescription being “64 tablets”, indicating the majority of prescription are “three times a day”.



Metformin and reduced vitamin B12 levels: new advice for monitoring patients at risk

A new report from the MHRA ([here](#)) states that Decreased vitamin B12 levels, or vitamin B12 deficiency, is now considered to be a common side effect in patients on metformin treatment, especially in those receiving a higher dose or longer treatment duration, and in those with existing risk factors.

The MHRA are therefore advising clinicians to check vitamin B12 serum levels in patients being treated with metformin who have symptoms suggestive of vitamin B12 deficiency. They also advise that periodic monitoring for patients with risk factors for vitamin B12 deficiency should be considered.