



➤ Sodium Valproate and possible risks of birth defects

Since its introduction in 1974 sodium valproate has included a warning about the possible risk of birth defects in its product information. As the risks to unborn children have been increasingly understood, the warnings have been strengthened. The MHRA has worked with industry, healthcare professionals and patient groups to produce a useful toolkit, which includes a short video for clinicians <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/toolkit-on-the-risks-of-valproate-medicines-in-female-patients> to ensure female patients are better informed about the risks of taking valproate medicines during pregnancy.

➤ NICE guidance on the clinical assessment and management on multimorbidity

This guideline covers optimising care for adults with multimorbidity (multiple long-term conditions) by reducing treatment burden (polypharmacy and multiple appointments) and unplanned care. It aims to improve quality of life by promoting shared decisions based on what is important to each person in terms of treatments, health priorities, lifestyle and goals. The guideline sets out which people are most likely to benefit from an approach to care that takes account of multimorbidity, how they can be identified and what the care involves <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng56>. There is a useful NICE bites summary <https://www.sps.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/NICE-Bites-Sept-2016-No-90-Multimorbidity.pdf>

➤ Nefopam price

The drug tariff price of nefopam 30mg tablets has increased over recent months to ~£60-120/month (1 or 2 tablets three times a day). Historically, it has been used for persistent pain unresponsive to other non-opioid analgesics. A Cochrane review of nefopam failed to find trial evidence of sufficient quality or quantity to recommend its use for chronic pain or acute post-operative pain. Limited evidence of benefit in on-going inflammatory pain associated with rheumatoid arthritis was off-set by its poor adverse event profile. There is also a concern that it is becoming increasingly popular choice for illicit use. As such it is recommended that new initiations of nefopam should be kept to a minimum and existing patients should be reviewed and alternatives considered.

➤ Fosfomycin

A new lower cost fosfomycin 3g granule preparation (Monuril) is now available at ~£5, rather than ~£50 per sachet. Fosfomycin is a treatment option for uncomplicated lower urinary tract infections when nitrofurantoin, trimethoprim and pivmecillinam are not viable choices. It should be prescribed as Monuril brand to avoid inadvertent dispensing of the high-cost alternative product.

➤ TARGET RCGP antibiotic webinar series

Many prescribers completed the TARGET training on respiratory and urinary tract infections within the last year. Public Health England and the British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy (BASC) have worked with primary care colleagues to develop a series of 7 free TARGET antibiotic webinars, highlighting key actions GPs can take to help improve their antibiotic prescribing, and at the same time improve the patient experience and self-care, therefore freeing up time.

The webinars start on Wednesday 2nd November, and will also be available after the event. To find out more and to sign up please go to <http://target-webinars.com/>

➤ Issues with Nacrez (Desogestrel)

Following supply issues and also a stock recall with the Nacrez brand of desogestrel it is recommended that desogestrel is prescribed generically.

➤ Fluenz [live intranasal vaccine (LAIV)] for adult patients with a needle phobia

Adult patients should be encouraged where possible to have the injected inactivated vaccine. For patients aged 60 years and over, Intanza, which is administered intradermally, may be preferable. Fluenz is not licensed in adults because there is some evidence of poorer efficacy when compared with the inactivated vaccine. However, individual medical practitioners may choose to use Fluenz "off-label" for adults, without any other medical contra-indication, who are eligible for influenza vaccination but who cannot be vaccinated with injectable vaccines. This could include patients with learning difficulties who become seriously distressed with needles.

The legislation does allow for such situations and states that 'prescribers can use unlicensed and off-label medicines where there is no suitable alternative.' The responsibility for such use rests with the health professional. In this situation, a patient specific direction will be required. In these exceptional circumstances, where it has not proved possible to administer the inactivated vaccine, **PHE has agreed that the national Fluenz stock can be used for this purpose.**

This edition is also available on PathfinderRF via the following link

<http://nww.pathfinder-rf.northants.nhs.uk/nene>

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