



Medicine Supply Notification

MSN/2024/060

Clarithromycin 125mg/5ml and 250mg/5ml oral suspensions

Tier 2 – medium impact*

Date of issue: 23/05/2024

Link: [Medicines Supply Tool](#)

Summary

- Shortages have been reported for clarithromycin 125mg/5ml and 250mg/5ml oral suspensions.
- Additional stock of clarithromycin 250mg/5ml is expected to be available in wholesalers from 24th May, and clarithromycin 125mg/5ml available from the 29th May 2024.
- Serious Shortage Protocols (SSP) for clarithromycin 125mg/5ml and 250mg/5ml oral suspension were issued on 22/05/2024.

Actions Required

Actions for pharmacists:

Where a prescription for clarithromycin 125mg/5ml or 250mg/5ml oral suspension is presented and cannot be fulfilled community pharmacists and dispensing doctors should:

- supply an alternative clarithromycin preparation where available and according to the products specified in SSP053 or SSP054;
- ensure the patients age, weight (where appropriate), cautions and exclusion criteria are taken into account when considering using an SSP;
- ensure patients/parents/carers are counselled regarding any switch in formulation including the appropriate dose and volume of the substitute product;
- ensure the patient's prescriber and/or GP practice is notified when supplying a patient in accordance with any of these SSPs; and
- if the patient is deemed ineligible or does not consent to receive an alternative product via the SSP, they should be promptly referred back to the prescriber.

Actions for prescribers:

Remaining clarithromycin oral suspensions should be reserved for patients prescribed doses lower than clarithromycin 250mg as these doses cannot be substituted with the 250mg tablets.

- consider use of clarithromycin tablets in the first instance if suitable (see Supporting information below);

*Classification of Tiers can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/a-guide-to-managing-medicines-supply-and-shortages/>

- if clarithromycin tablets are not suitable, and clarithromycin is the most appropriate antibiotic, consider prescribing clarithromycin oral suspension, working with local pharmacy teams to understand availability; and
- if the above options are unsuitable or unavailable, or the patient is ineligible or does not consent to receive the product via the SSP, consider prescribing an alternative antibiotic taking into account any allergies and referring to local guidance.

Supporting information

Clinical Information

Clarithromycin is a macrolide antibiotic used in the treatment of infections caused by aerobic and anaerobic gram-positive and gram-negative organisms, as well as certain atypical organisms that do not respond to beta-lactams. It is also a potential treatment option in penicillin-allergic patients.

Clarithromycin oral suspension is licensed for use in children aged 6 months to 12 years. Clarithromycin tablets are unlicensed in children under 12 years, so use of the tablets in this age group would be considered “off-label”.

Where children are unable to swallow solid oral dosage forms of antibiotics, SPS have provided [advice](#) on crushing or dispersing immediate release clarithromycin tablets (off label manipulation).

Consideration should be given to local and [national](#) guidance on antimicrobial prescribing.

[Links to further information:](#)

[NHSBSA Serious Shortage Protocols](#)

[SmPCs clarithromycin](#)

[BNF interactions clarithromycin](#)

[BNF side effects clarithromycin](#)

Enquiries

All organisations should send enquiries about this notice to the DHSC Medicine Supply Team quoting reference number MSN/2024/060

Email: DHSCmedicinesupplyteam@dhsc.gov.uk.