



Medicine Supply Notification

MSN/2023/044

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

Tier 2 – medium impact*

Date of issue: 06/04/2023

Link: [Medicines Supply Tool](#)

Summary

- Clarithromycin 125mg/5ml oral suspension is out of stock until w/c 10th April 2023
- Clarithromycin 250mg/5ml oral suspension is in limited supply until w/c 10th April 2023
- Serious Shortage Protocols (SSP) for clarithromycin 125mg/5ml and 250mg/5ml oral suspension were issued on 06/04/2023

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 patient's age, weight (where appropriate), cautions and exclusion criteria are taken into account when considering using an SSP; and
- 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)
- 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, consider prescribing an alternative antibiotic taking into account any allergies and referring to local guidance.

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

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

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:

[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/2023/044

Email: DHSCmedicinesupplyteam@dhsc.gov.uk.