

Supplement No.1 (March 2015) ♦ Produced by The Prescribing Team

A "Specials" Special!

A pharmaceutical 'special' is defined as a medicine manufactured to meet the particular needs of an individual patient. These 'specials' are unlicensed and, unlike licensed medicines, are not assessed for safety or efficacy by the regulatory body. Therefore, the prescriber will have to accept greater responsibility for the safety and effectiveness of the product. When dispensing specials, pharmacists also have professional responsibilities and can be liable if their actions or omissions contribute to the harm of patients.

NHS Circular PCA(P)(2013) 4 recommends that specials and imported unlicensed medicines should only be used where there is no suitable licensed alternative. This Circular also requires community pharmacy contractors to seek Health Board authorisation before ordering and dispensing specials and imported unlicensed medicines for products not listed in Part 7S of the Scottish Drug Tariff.

When should a "special" be used?

A prescriber may decide that a licensed product or formulation is no longer suitable for a patient and wish to use a "special" instead. There are four steps to consider before a prescription is issued:

1. Is a licensed alternative available? E.g. Could the licensed formulation of gabapentin of 50mg/ml be prescribed in place of gabapentin XX/5ml which is a special
2. Is there an alternative drug in the formulary that could be used? E.g. prescribe licensed atenolol solution instead of "special" bisoprolol solution.
3. Is there a licensed product that could be used "off-license"? E.g. use ciprofloxacin eye drops off-label in the ear instead of significantly higher cost "special" ciprofloxacin ear drops.
4. Could the tablets be crushed or capsules opened instead of using a "special"?

Consideration should also be given to other aspects of the patient's medication. For example, does the patient take other solid dose medication instead of switching to all oral solutions? Or consideration of other

pharmaceutical aspects e.g. Fluoxetine 10mg tablets are unlicensed and expensive. Fluoxetine has a long half-life, so if a patient is requiring fluoxetine 10mg a similar efficacy can be obtained with alternate day dosing of fluoxetine 20mg capsules, halving licensed dispersible 20mg tablets or using the licensed 20mg/5ml liquid preparation.

GGC Process

Costs of "specials" can be variable and extremely high. Although a prescriber can choose to prescribe a "special", community pharmacists may require Health Board authorisation before dispensing these prescriptions.

Upon receipt of a "special" prescription, community pharmacists are advised to contact the prescriber to make them aware the item is a "special" and discuss the use of any suitable licensed alternatives.

If the prescriber confirms a "special" is necessary, pharmacists may then have to seek Health Board authorisation before ordering the product. This is to ensure all licensed alternatives have been considered and that products are sourced economically.

The second page of this bulletin shows how "specials" can be identified when prescribing on both EMIS and VISION systems.

Selecting a "special" on EMIS:

When using EMIS, "specials" will have a status of "U". When a "special" is selected a warning may also appear highlighting that the medicine is unlicensed.

Add Drugs

Problem Titles: NOT LINKED

Name: OMEPRAZOLE

Dosage: []

Day/Qty: []

Rx Type: []

Duration: [] Rx Review: []

Re-Issues: [] Main Review: 21/01/2016 Urgent

Options: Formulary : GGC PREFERRED LIST JAN 2015 (56 DAY)

Warnings & Status | Preparations | Drug Details

Items Found : 16

Item	Status
B Omeprazole Capsules (Gastro-Resistant) 10 mg	P
C Omeprazole Capsules (Gastro-Resistant) 40 mg	P
D Omeprazole Powder for solution for infusion 40 mg vial	P
E Omeprazole Tablets (Gastro-Resistant) 10 mg	P
F Omeprazole Tablets (Gastro-Resistant) 20 mg	P
G Omeprazole Tablets (Gastro-Resistant) 40 mg	P
H Omeprazole Powder with solvent for injection 40 mg vial	P
I Omeprazole Dispersible (Gastro-Resistant) Tablets 10 mg	P
J Omeprazole Dispersible (Gastro-Resistant) Tablets 20 mg	P
K Omeprazole Dispersible (Gastro-Resistant) Tablets 40 mg	P
L Omeprazole Oral suspension 20 mg/5 ml	U
M Omeprazole Oral suspension 10 mg/5 ml	U

Buttons: Clear | G/T Switch | BNF Data | Next | Issue & Print | Issue | Cancel

Selecting a "special" on VISION:

Name: omepraz

Form: <any> Strength: []

Buttons: Find | Clear

Formulary

Discontinued

All Generics

Special

Hierarchy

Change

Close

Help

s g Omeprazole 8.5mg/5ml oral solution
s g Omeprazole 10mg/5ml oral solution
s g Omeprazole 12.5mg/5ml oral solution
s g Omeprazole 15mg/5ml oral solution
s g Omeprazole 15.5mg/5ml oral solution
s g Omeprazole 20mg/5ml oral solution
s g Omeprazole 25mg/5ml oral solution
s g Omeprazole 35mg/5ml oral solution
s g Omeprazole 40mg/5ml oral solution
s g Omeprazole 50mg/5ml oral solution
s g Omeprazole 500micrograms/5ml oral suspension
s g Omeprazole 2mg/5ml oral suspension

Special, NHS.

s Omeprazole 20mg/5ml oral solution

Product Details

Packs

Equivalents

Branded Generics

In VISION, a tick must be placed in "special" box to view "specials" and when a specific product is selected it will show at the bottom of the screen as a "special" on an NHS prescription.