

Prescribing and Medicines Optimisation Guidance

Issue: 34

Date: 3rd December 2020

1. Vitamin D Supplements

The Government has announced that vulnerable people across England will be offered free vitamin D supplements for the winter. A prescription will not be needed for the supply for those eligible. Vitamin D should not be prescribed for those people who are not eligible and do not need treatment doses.

All care homes will automatically receive a provision for their residents, while individuals on the clinically extremely vulnerable list will receive a letter inviting them to opt in for a supply to be delivered directly to their homes. Deliveries will be free of charge, starting in January, and will provide 4 months' worth of supplements to last people through the winter months. It will be important to check that residents aren't already taking this together with a calcium supplement.

The advice from Public Health England (PHE) is for everybody to take 10 micrograms (400 IU) of vitamin D a day between October and early March to keep bones and muscles healthy. PHE advises people who are more at risk of not having enough vitamin D to take a vitamin D supplement all year round. **This should be purchased over the counter, except those requiring high treatment doses to prevent vitamin D deficiency.** A range of products and doses are available at supermarkets, pharmacies and other retailers.

Anyone who is able to purchase a vitamin D supplement and start taking them now is advised to do so, even if you are also eligible for a delivery later in the year.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) will provide further information and guidance for all nursing and residential care home providers in the coming weeks.

For anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable and has been offered a free supply of vitamin D supplements in England from January 2021. Please see the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vitamin-d-supplements-how-to-take-them-safely>

The guidance explains who should opt in and how the supplements should be consumed and stored.

You should not opt in to receive the vitamin D supplement if:

- you are already taking, or are prescribed, a vitamin D supplement by your GP or healthcare professional
- you are under the age of 18
- you have a medical condition or treatment that means you may not be able to safely take as much vitamin D as the general population

There are some groups who need to be particularly careful including those under the care of a renal, endocrinology or cancer specialist. This could include people with high vitamin D levels, kidney stones (now or in the past), too much parathyroid hormone (hyperparathyroidism), cancer (some cancers can lead to high calcium levels), severe kidney disease and a rare illness called sarcoidosis.

Patients are advised to read this document in full before deciding whether to opt in and start taking the vitamin D supplements offered to them. If patients would like to opt in, they need to register their details between 30 November 2020 and 4 January 2021.

Please see below for relevant links and supporting information:

Statement from PHE and NICE on vitamin D supplementation during winter - GOV.UK

www.gov.uk/government/publications/vitamin-d-supplementation-during-winter-phe-and-nice-statement/statement-from-phe-and-nice-on-vitamin-d-supplementation-during-winter

Get vitamin D supplements – NHS

www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/get-vitamin-d-supplements/

Vitamin D supplements: how to take them safely - GOV.UK

www.gov.uk/government/publications/vitamin-d-supplements-how-to-take-them-safely

2. SCAN (South Central Antimicrobial Network) guidelines update

Version 3.0 (November 2020) of the SCAN guidelines have now been published.

The changes to version 3.0 are as follows;

Updated pages:

- influenza
- cellulitis
- uncomplicated UTI in non-pregnant women
- fluoroquinolones alert: cardiac risks

Please see previous bulletin 24 for information on how to download the app. Guidance is also available via the SCAN website. ([Link](#))

3. Medicines Safety Website

The Medicines Safety Portal is a collaboration between the Southampton Medicines Advice Service at University Hospital Southampton, and Wessex AHSN and can be accessed on the link below:

www.medicinesafety.co.uk/p/welcome.html

This site aims to help GPs, pharmacists and nurses in primary care to use medicines safely. The clinical topics section has e-learning showing how to protect patients from selected prescription medicines that sometimes cause harm. The site also has resources to help with problem solving on subjects such as interactions, shortages, and the safety of herbal medicines, and an index to free online information sources about medicines that may help with decision-making.

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Hampshire and IoW CCGs Medicines Optimisation Teams

Previous bulletins can be found at:

<https://gp-portal.westhampshireccq.nhs.uk/medicines/covid-19-medicines-information/covid-19-medicines-optimisation-bulletins/>