



## UPDATE:

Update to communications issued 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023  
Material updates are shown in bold

# Medicine Supply Notification

MSN/2023/103U

Co-trimoxazole 40mg/200mg/5ml oral suspension sugar free **and**  
**Co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg/5ml oral suspension**

Tier 3 – high impact\*

Date of issue: 12/02/2024

Link: [Medicines Supply Tool](#)

## Summary

- Co-trimoxazole 40mg/200mg/5ml oral suspension sugar free is out of stock until **early July 2024**.
- **Co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg/5ml oral suspension is out of stock until mid-March 2024.**
- **Co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg tablets and 160mg/800mg tablets remain available and can support increased demand.**
- Where this is not suitable, unlicensed supplies of co-trimoxazole oral suspension may be sourced, lead times vary.

## Actions Required

**Until co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg/5ml oral suspension is back in stock, clinicians/prescribers should consider if co-trimoxazole is the most appropriate antibiotic of choice for the patient's condition and whether there is a suitable alternative.**

**Where co-trimoxazole is required, clinicians/prescribers should:**

- **consider prescribing co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg tablets, either half a tablet or full tablet, where patients are on a dose of co-trimoxazole 40mg/200mg or 80mg/400mg respectively, or co-trimoxazole 160mg/800mg tablets. Tablets may be crushed (see Supporting Information);**
- **reserve any remaining oral suspension for patients on part doses not deliverable by tablet, or for patients on enteral feeding tubes;**
- consider prescribing unlicensed products only where licensed alternatives are not appropriate. Prescribers should work with local pharmacy teams to ensure orders are placed within appropriate time frames as lead times may vary (see Supporting Information below); and
- if the above options are not considered appropriate, advice should be sought from specialist on management options.

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

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

### Secondary Care only:

- where there is insufficient stock and where clinical judgement determines that a patient should remain on co-trimoxazole, liaise with pharmacy to request mutual aid, facilitated by their Regional Pharmacy Procurement Specialist.

Additionally, when co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg/5ml oral suspension is back in stock, clinicians/prescribers should:

- consider prescribing co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg/5ml oral suspension which will be able to support the demand for both oral suspensions, ensuring that the patient is not intolerant to any of the excipients and is counselled on the appropriate dose and volume required (see Supporting Information below).

## Supporting information

### Clinical Information

#### Administering tablets:

Use co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg tablets or 160mg/800mg strength tablets. For a 40mg/200mg dose give HALF a co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg tablet.

If the patient is unable to swallow tablets, they may be crushed and mixed in a small amount of water/apple puree/soft food before administration.

For patients on enteral feeding tubes there is an increased risk of tube blockage if crushed/dispersed tablets are used.

Following resupply of co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg/5ml oral suspension where co-trimoxazole 40mg/200mg/5ml oral suspension sugar free is unavailable:

Co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg/5ml oral suspension contains different excipients (see Table 1) and may not be as palatable for children. Patients with rare hereditary problems of fructose intolerance, glucose-galactose malabsorption or sucrose-isomaltase insufficiency should not take this medicine. However, it may be considered in other patients once it is confirmed that the patient is not intolerant to any of the excipients, and patient/carer is counselled on the appropriate dose and volume required.

Co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg/5ml oral suspension is licenced in adults and children over 12 years, therefore use outside of this age range would be regarded off-label use.

**NOTE: 5ml of co-trimoxazole 40mg/200mg oral suspension = 2.5ml of the co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg/5ml oral suspension.**

Table 1: Excipients specific to each presentation

<b>Co-trimoxazole 40mg/200mg/5ml oral suspension sugar free</b>	<b>Co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg/5ml oral suspension</b>
Sorbitol solution 70% (non crystallising) (E420 ii) Sodium Carmellose Sodium Benzoate (E211) Flavour, Banana 81.605P	Syrup or sucrose Sodium carboxymethylcellulose (E467) Ammonium glycyrrhizinate Star Anise Oil

## Links to further information:

[SmPC - Co-trimoxazole 40mg/200mg/5ml oral suspension](#)

[SmPC - Co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg/5ml oral suspension](#)

[SmPC – Co-trimoxazole tablets](#)

[BNF – Co-trimoxazole](#)

## Guidance on ordering and prescribing unlicensed imports

The following specialist importers have confirmed they can source unlicensed co-trimoxazole oral suspension. Sugared and sugar-free co-trimoxazole 40mg/200mg/5ml preparations have been sourced, please confirm with importer if a particular formulation type is required. (Please note there may be other companies that can also source supplies):

- Alium
- Genetech
- Orifarm
- Smartway
- Target

Any decision to prescribe an unlicensed medicine must consider the relevant guidance and NHS Trust or local governance procedures. Please see the links below for further information:

- [The supply of unlicensed medicinal products](#), Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
- [Professional Guidance for the Procurement and Supply of Specials](#), Royal Pharmaceutical Society
- [Prescribing unlicensed medicines](#), General Medical Council (GMC),

When prescribing a product that is not licensed in the UK due to a supply issue with the licensed alternative prescribers must indicate on the FP10 prescription that an unlicensed product is required. This can be done in one of the following two ways:

- Electronic prescriptions – if the required unlicensed product is shown on electronic prescribing systems, GPs should select:
  - co-trimoxazole 40mg/200mg/5ml oral suspension (imported)
  - co-trimoxazole 80mg/400mg/5ml oral suspension (imported)
- Paper prescriptions – where the unlicensed product is not shown on electronic prescribing systems, GPs should use a paper prescription and annotate with the following wording: “**special order**”.

## Enquiries

Enquiries from NHS Trusts in England should in the first instance be directed to your Regional Pharmacy Procurement Specialist, who will escalate to national teams if required.

REGION	Lead RPPS	Email	Associate RPPS	Email
Midlands	Andi Swain	<a href="mailto:andi.swain@nhs.net">andi.swain@nhs.net</a>	Diptyka Hart	<a href="mailto:Diptyka.Hart@uhb.nhs.uk">Diptyka.Hart@uhb.nhs.uk</a>
East of England	James Kent	<a href="mailto:james.kent@nhs.net">james.kent@nhs.net</a>	Tracy McMillan	<a href="mailto:tracy.mcmillan2@nhs.net">tracy.mcmillan2@nhs.net</a>
London	Jackie Eastwood	<a href="mailto:jacqueline.eastwood@gstt.nhs.uk">jacqueline.eastwood@gstt.nhs.uk</a>	Daniel Johnson	<a href="mailto:Daniel.Johnson@gstt.nhs.uk">Daniel.Johnson@gstt.nhs.uk</a>

<b>North East and Yorkshire</b>	David Allwood	<a href="mailto:davidallwood@nhs.net">davidallwood@nhs.net</a>	Penny Daynes	<a href="mailto:penny.daynes@nhs.net">penny.daynes@nhs.net</a>
<b>North West</b>	Richard Bateman	<a href="mailto:richard.bateman@liverpoolft.nhs.uk">richard.bateman@liverpoolft.nhs.uk</a>	Andy Stewart	<a href="mailto:Andrew.stewart@liverpoolft.nhs.uk">Andrew.stewart@liverpoolft.nhs.uk</a>
<b>South East</b>	Alison Ashman	<a href="mailto:Alison.Ashman@berkshire.nhs.uk">Alison.Ashman@berkshire.nhs.uk</a>	Melanie Renney	<a href="mailto:melanie.renney@berkshire.nhs.uk">melanie.renney@berkshire.nhs.uk</a>
<b>South West</b>	Danny Palmer	<a href="mailto:danny.palmer@uhbw.nhs.uk">danny.palmer@uhbw.nhs.uk</a>	Natalie Bryson	<a href="mailto:Natalie.Bryson@uhbw.nhs.uk">Natalie.Bryson@uhbw.nhs.uk</a>

### **Scotland**

[nss.nhssmedicineshortages@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.nhssmedicineshortages@nhs.scot)

### **Wales**

[MedicinesShortages@gov.wales](mailto:MedicinesShortages@gov.wales)

### **Northern Ireland**

[RPHPS.Admin@northerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:RPHPS.Admin@northerntrust.hscni.net)

All other organisations should send enquiries about this notice to the DHSC Medicine Supply Team quoting reference number MSN/2023/103U

Email: [DHSCmedicinesupplyteam@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:DHSCmedicinesupplyteam@dhsc.gov.uk).