



Supply Disruption Alert

SDA/2020/014

Issued: 02/12/2020

Atracurium besilate solution for injection vials and ampoules (all strengths)

Summary

- Atracurium 250mg/25ml solution for injection is currently out of stock and there are limited supplies of all other strengths of atracurium injection remaining in the UK supply chain due to the recent increase in demand to support the UKs COVID-19 response.
- Rocuronium is available in sufficient quantities to support the increase in demand and should be considered the first line alternative as detailed in guidance below.
- Based on current demand it is expected that supplies of atracurium could be exhausted before the end of December.
- Unlicensed imports are available but not in sufficient quantities to meet full forecasted demand.
- Other neuromuscular blocking agents (NMBAs) which include; cisatracurium, rocuronium and vecuronium continue to be available. Trusts and hospitals who use these agents should continue to do so.
- Trusts and hospitals who use atracurium should work with clinical colleagues to support changing to rocuronium as an alternative agent where appropriate. Trusts and hospitals are encouraged to switch before the Christmas period to ensure staff are fully briefed about changes in prescribing guidance.
- Trusts should continue to order a maximum of four days' supply in line with current national recommendations.

Action

Trust/hospital clinical teams should:

- Work with pharmacy colleagues to review current prescribing practise of NMBAs;
- Refer to the guidance issued by the Royal College of Anaesthetists and Association of Anaesthetists, to help support the local switching between neuromuscular blocking agents:
<https://icmanaesthesiacovid-19.org/drug-demand-supply-anaesthetic-drug-usage-and-administration> and;
- Prepare prescribing guidance to support clinical areas when atracurium is not available, in line with the following national guidance:

For theatres

Use rocuronium for both induction and maintenance of anaesthesia. Where possible.

For critical care

Use rocuronium for induction and maintenance, where possible. To maintain supplies of all NMBAs, bolus doses adjusted according to the clinical response may be used instead of an infusion.

Local pharmacy teams should:

- Continue to order all NMBA's in line with demand and no more than four days stock;
- Work with your Medicines Use and Safety Officer to consider how you will safely manage stock within your trust; and
- Consider local management options to decrease waste locally for example by only drawing up what you will use. Further guidance about this can be found on the SPS website which you need a login to access:
<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/minimising-wastage-of-critical-medicines-during-covid-19/>

Regional and National Procurement leads should:

- Ensure trusts/hospitals and health boards are regularly reviewing local stock holding;
- Work collaboratively with trust/hospitals and suppliers/distributors to challenge excessive orders;
- Identify trusts and hospitals who have stock holding beyond actual demand and work with trusts to re-distribute this stock across their region; and
- Support local stock sharing between trusts and hospitals where appropriate.

Deadlines for actions

Actions initiated: on receipt of this alert
 Actions completed: 18/12/2020

Supporting Information

- Due to the use of various formulations and presentations of critical medicines that may be used during the Covid-19 outbreak, a poster has been created to highlight to clinical staff the importance of reading the product label. The poster can be found by following the attached link
<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/drug-packaging-and-labelling-during-covid-19-poster-and-screensaver-for-teams/>

Distribution**Trusts (NHS boards in Scotland and Wales)**

CAS and SABS (NI) liaison officers for onward distribution to all relevant staff including:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| • A&E consultants | • Chief pharmacists |
| • A&E departments | • Clinical governance leads |
| • A&E directors | • Clinical Procurement Specialists |
| • A&E nurses | • District nurses |
| • Adult intensive care units | • Hospital at home units |
| • Anaesthesia, directors of | • Hospital pharmacies |
| • Anaesthetic medical staff | • Hospital pharmacists |
| • Anaesthetic nursing staff | • Immunologists |
| • Anaesthetists | • Intensive care medical staff/paediatrics |
| • Cardiologists | • Intensive care nursing staff (adult) |
| • Cardiology departments | • Intensive care nursing staff (paediatric) |
| • Cardiology nurses | • Intensive care units |
| • Cardiology, directors of | • Intensive care, directors of |
| • Cardiothoracic departments | • IV nurse specialists |
| • Cardiothoracic surgeons | • Intensive care, directors of |
| • Cardiothoracic surgery directors | • Obstetricians |

- Obstetrics and gynaecology departments
- Obstetrics and gynaecology directors
- Obstetrics departments
- Obstetrics nurses
- Paediatric intensive care units
- Paediatric medicine, directors of
- Palliative care teams
- Pharmaceutical advisors
- Pharmacists
- Purchasing managers
- Theatre managers
- Theatre nurses

Independent distribution

Establishments registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (England only)

- Hospitals in the independent sector
- Independent treatment centres
- Nursing agencies
- Private medical practitioners

Enquiries

England

Enquiries from NHS Trusts in England should in the first instance be directed to you trust pharmacy team who will escalate issues to the Regional Pharmacy Procurement Specialist and national teams if required.

REGION	Full Name	Email
East Midlands	Andi Swain	andi.swain@nhs.net
East of England	James Kent	james.kent@southend.nhs.uk
London	Jackie Eastwood	jacqueline.eastwood@lpp.nhs.uk
North East	David Cook	david.cook20@nhs.net
North West	Glenn Harley	Glenn.Harley@liverpoolft.nhs.uk
South Central	Alison Ashman	Alison.Ashman@berkshire.nhs.uk
South East Coast	Richard Bateman	richard.bateman2@nhs.net
South West	Danny Palmer	Danny.Palmer@uhbw.nhs.uk
West Midlands	Diptyka Hart	Diptyka.Hart@uhb.nhs.uk
Yorkshire & Humber	David Allwood	davidallwood@nhs.net

Scotland

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Wales

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Northern Ireland

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All other organisations should send enquiries about this notice to the DHSC Supply Resilience Team, quoting reference number **SDA/2020/014**

Email: supplyresiliencemd@dhsc.gov.uk