

# Apomorphine

Traffic light classification- Amber 1  
Information sheet for Primary Care Prescribers

## CLINICAL INFORMATION

### Key points

- Patients should be pre-treated with domperidone (10mg tds) for at least 2 days before starting on apomorphine (**see [MHRA advice below](#)**).
- Patients using apomorphine by intermittent injection usually need to continue their other medications as before, whereas those on continuous subcutaneous infusions can usually reduce their other treatments considerably.
- Adjustments to the dosage and route of injection of apomorphine will be made in Secondary care. All patients on apomorphine have telephone access to relevant Parkinsons Disease Nurse Specialists.

### Licensed Indications

Apomorphine is licensed for use in refractory motor fluctuations in Parkinson's disease ('off' episodes) inadequately controlled by levodopa with dopa-decarboxylase inhibitor or other dopaminergics (for capable and motivated patients under specialist supervision).

### Therapeutic Summary

As per the licensed indication.

NICE recommendations for the use of apomorphine in Parkinson's disease conclude that:

- intermittent apomorphine injections may be used to reduce off- time in people with PD with severe motor complications; (Evidence level B)
- continuous subcutaneous infusions of apomorphine may be used to reduce off- time and dyskinesias in people with PD with severe motor complications. Its initiation should be restricted to expert units with facilities for appropriate monitoring. (Evidence level D)

### Medicines Initiation

Consultant neurologist / specialist experienced in the management of PD.

- The patient's treatment with levodopa, with or without dopamine agonists, should be optimised before starting apomorphine.
- Establish patient on Domperidone. In line with the [MHRA 2014](#) recommendations, this should be under the following conditions:
  1. The dose is 10mg tds maximum and should be started at least 2 days before starting treatment with Apomorphine.
  2. The duration of treatment should not typically exceed 7 days in total.
  3. If patients are receiving medications known to prolong the QT interval (see [appendix three](#), [MHRA 2016](#) and <http://www.sads.org.uk/drugs-to-avoid/>), or if the patient has

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- a history of cardiac rhythm disturbance or underlying cardiac disease, such as congestive cardiac failure, an ECG is performed prior to starting therapy.
4. Concurrent treatment with potent CYP3A4 enzyme inhibiting drugs should be avoided with Domperidone (see [Appendix three](#)).
  5. Domperidone is not given to patients identified in category 3 who have an abnormal ECG, including prolongation of the corrected QT interval.
  6. Any patient receiving domperidone is given advice to seek prompt medical attention if symptoms such as syncope or palpitations develop during treatment.
  7. If symptomatic nausea occurs after 7 days, patients will have an ECG performed, to confirm that the QT is not prolonged before a domperidone prescription is re-issued.
- The first dose of apomorphine should be given in the controlled environment of a specialist clinic to establish efficacy, tolerability and appropriate dosage for an adequate patient response. The threshold dose will be determined by the specialist, using incremental dosing schedules. Typically, this will be performed in our day case unit at the Queens Medical Centre.
  - For patients requiring continuous subcutaneous infusions, a specialist nurse will assist in the initiation and titration of the patient's dose and train the patient and / or carer / district nurse on how to set up the infusion.

### Dose Regimen and route of administration

Apomorphine can be administered by either continuous subcutaneous infusion or by intermittent subcutaneous injection.

### Maximum daily dose by either route is 100 mg.

If administered by intermittent injection, the range is typically 1-10 injections. Each bolus dose should not be more than 10 mg. Continuous subcutaneous infusion would usually be considered if the patient experiences so many 'off' periods that repeated bolus injections are inappropriate (> 10 per day).

Hourly infusion rates are typically 1 – 4 mg per hour (but may be higher, depending on individual response) and should normally run during waking hours only. Once the optimal dose for an individual patient has been determined and the patient is stable, the dose is likely to remain relatively constant.

### APO-go<sup>®</sup> POD cartridge initiation or switch

The responsibility of initiating or switching patients to APO-go<sup>®</sup> POD cartridge will be with the specialist. Apo-go nurses will work with specialists to identify and support patients to transfer from the pre-filled syringes to the APO-go<sup>®</sup> POD cartridge. They will also provide device training for patient, carers or other healthcare professionals as well as ongoing support in the community. Please see Apo-nurses' responsibilities section in the [shared care protocol](#) for further information.

GPs will be requested to prescribe APO-go<sup>®</sup> POD cartridges, lines, and sharps bin. The specialist will list the drugs, ancillaries, and consumables to be prescribed in primary care in the referral letter.

### Products available

Brand prescribing of apomorphine products is encouraged to prevent confusion and to ensure the correct formulation is prescribed. Products available for use are listed in the table on the next page:

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Product	Pack size	Cost*	Reconstitution required	Expiry once in use
<p>APO-go<sup>®</sup> POD 5 mg/ml solution for infusion in cartridge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available as 100mg/20ml</li> </ul> <p>Formulary alternative to APO-go<sup>®</sup> PFS 5mg/ml solution for infusion in pre-filled syringe which is being gradually phased out.</p>	5	£146.22	No	<p>48 hours</p> <p>Once opened APO-go POD should be used immediately.</p>
<p>APO-go<sup>®</sup> PFS 5mg/ml solution for infusion in pre-filled syringe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available as 50mg/10ml pre-filled syringe</li> </ul> <p>Being phased out and replaced with APO-go<sup>®</sup> POD 5 mg/ml solution for infusion in cartridge.</p>	5	£73.11	No	<p>Single use only. Unused solution should be discarded within 24 hours.</p>
<p>Dacepton<sup>®</sup> 5mg/ml solution for infusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available as 100mg/20ml vial</li> </ul>	5	£145.00	No	7 days
<p>APO-go<sup>®</sup> pen 10mg/ml solution for injection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available as 30mg/3ml pre-filled pen</li> </ul>	5	£123.91	No	48 hours
<p>Dacepton<sup>®</sup> 10mg/ml solution for injection cartridges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available as 30mg/3ml cartridge to be used with D-Mine Pen</li> </ul>	5	£123.00	No	15 days
<p>APO-go<sup>®</sup> ampoules 10mg/ml solution for injection or infusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available as 50mg/5ml ampoule.</li> <li>Rarely used in Nottinghamshire due to additional risks of dilution.</li> </ul>	5	£73.11	It is recommended to dilute 50:50 with 0.9% normal saline or water for injection resulting in 5mg/ml strength, to reduce skin complications (i.e. subcutaneous nodules which can develop.	<p>Single use only. Unused or diluted solution should be discarded within 24 hours.</p>

\*cost correct from NHSBSA Drug Tariff June-23

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### Duration of treatment

Apomorphine therapy is a treatment for a chronic disease and therefore the course length can be many years. It is used in late-stage Parkinson's disease and some patients have received apomorphine for >5 years.

### Contraindications

- Respiratory depression
- Dementia
- Psychotic diseases
- Hepatic insufficiency
- Patients who have an 'on' response to levodopa, which is marred by severe dyskinesia or dystonia.
- Children and adolescents under 18 years of age.
- Known hypersensitivity to apomorphine or any of the excipients of the medicinal product.
- Pregnancy and lactation (See section 4.6 of the Apomorphine Summary of Product Characteristics).
- The concomitant use of apomorphine with drugs of the 5HT<sub>3</sub> antagonist class is contraindicated (including, for example, ondansetron, granisetron, dolasetron, palonosetron and alosetron), based on reports of profound hypotension and loss of consciousness. (See section 4.5 of the [Apomorphine Summary of Product Characteristics](#)).

### Precautions

- Renal, pulmonary, cardiovascular disease
- Patients prone to nausea & vomiting
- Pre-existing neuropsychiatric conditions
- Pre-existing postural hypotension

### Monitoring

Haematological testing (full blood count, reticulocyte count and Coombs test) will be carried out in Secondary care prior to and following initiation of apomorphine, as appropriate.

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#### Adverse Effects

Side Effects	Action
Localised discomfort at needle site	Rotate injection site daily.
Nodule formation at needle or infusion site	Usually asymptomatic. Rotate injection site. May persist in pts on high doses. See <a href="#">appendix one</a> . Severe nodule formation may lead to worsening of symptoms due to erratic absorption of Apomorphine. Discuss with neurologist/PD nurse specialist (PDNS) in this instance.
Local infection/abscess/ulceration/scarring	Discuss with neurologist/PDNS.
Nausea & vomiting	Usually transient
Sedation	Usually transient. Advise patients not to drive / operate machinery if affected. If persists discuss with neurologist/ PDNS.
Orthostatic hypotension	Usually transient
Light-headedness	Discuss with neurologist/ PDNS.
Dyskinesias during 'On' periods	Discuss with neurologist/ PDNS.
Coomb's positive Haemolytic anaemia	Discuss with neurologist/ PDNS.
Eosinophilia	Discuss with neurologist/ PDNS.
Neuropsychiatric complications – hallucinations, euphoria, increased libido, confusion, personality changes, agitation, restlessness, psychosis, sleep disturbance	Discuss with neurologist/ PDNS.
Allergic reactions including bronchospasm and anaphylaxis (due to sodium bisulphite)	Withhold and discuss with neurologist/ PDNS.

Patients, carers and hospital and community nurses should be made aware that apomorphine, when spilt on clothes and most surfaces, will leave a permanent olive-green stain which is almost impossible to remove. The immediate use of lemon juice can be of some use to prevent permanent stains.

#### Clinically relevant medicine interactions and their management

Patients selected for treatment with apomorphine HCl are almost certain to be taking concomitant medications for their Parkinson's disease. In the initial stages of apomorphine therapy the patient should be monitored for unusual side-effects or signs of potentiation of effect.

- **Neuroleptic medicinal products**

May have an antagonistic effect if used with apomorphine. There is a potential interaction between clozapine and apomorphine; however, clozapine may also be used to reduce the symptoms of neuropsychiatric complications.

- **Antihypertensive and Cardiac Active Medicinal Drugs**

Even when co-administered with domperidone, apomorphine may potentiate the antihypertensive effects of these drugs. Caution should be used in patients taking vasoactive medicinal products such as antihypertensives, especially in patients with pre-existing postural hypotension.

- The possible effects of apomorphine on the plasma concentrations of other drugs have not been studied. Therefore, caution is advised when combining apomorphine with other drugs, especially those with a narrow therapeutic range.

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For a full list of contraindications, precautions and medication interactions refer to the Summary Product Characteristics [SPC](#) and [BNF](#).

### Information given to patient

- Audio visual and written literature for patients, showing practical advice on using apomorphine and frequently asked questions, will be provided by Secondary care as per responsibilities.
- A patient information leaflet is available from [Parkinson's UK](#).

### NEEDLES, TUBING and PUMPS

Although the manufacturers loan infusion pumps to patients on apomorphine, the tubing and needles for infusion must be prescribed separately. The Neria<sup>®</sup> lines made by Unomedical are recommended and have been stability tested with APO-go<sup>®</sup>, APO-go<sup>®</sup> POD and Dacepton<sup>®</sup>. These lines have an attached needle with an adhesive patch, which makes it easy for patients to insert the needle at the correct angle.

GP will need to prescribe apomorphine, lines and sharps bin (the specialist will list the drugs, ancillaries, and consumables to be prescribed in primary care in the referral letter). Britannia pharmaceuticals will supply crono-bell sleeves and Luer caps FOC.

Batteries for APO-go pumps should be changed approximately every 6 months and a spare will be supplied by Britannia when the pump is issued. The expected battery life for APO-go<sup>®</sup> POD is approximately 100 infusions, one 3V lithium battery. All new pumps come with a spare battery. In the event of any malfunction or concerns with the APO-go or APO-go<sup>®</sup> POD pump, Britannia should be contacted via their 24-hour helpline (08081964242).

Two rechargeable batteries with a charging docking station are supplied by Ever Pharma UK Ltd for the D-Mine pump. The battery life is 6 days; however, it is recommended that the battery is changed every day, so that full charge is available. An 80% battery charge is required to fill the reservoir. In the event of any malfunction or concerns about D-Mine pump, Ever Pharma should be contacted via their 24 hours support line (0800 2540175).

### Storage

Do not store above 25°C. Store in the original package. Do not use if the solution has turned green. The solution should be inspected visually prior to use. Only clear, colourless and particle free solution should be used.

### An estimate of the number of patients affected

Apomorphine is typically indicated in 1% of the total PD population. This would equate to approximately 18 patients locally.

### An estimate of the potential medicine costs (and any additional costs) to primary care

See [appendix two](#).

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Review date: July 2026

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### REFERENCES

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## Appendix One

At present there are no proven effective strategies to reduce or prevent nodules from occurring (Hagell & Odin 2001). However, the following may be of benefit.

*Practical advice on how to reduce nodule formation:*

- Ensure a clean aseptic technique.
- Good insertion technique is essential.
- If possible, minimise the number of people involved in setting up the infusion. The more people who are involved, the more likely it is that quality of the insertion technique will vary.
- It is crucial that the needle site is rotated daily.
- Gentle massage of the injection site on a daily basis by hand or with a hand-held massage device may be helpful in reducing nodule formation.
- There have been some anecdotal reports that local application of ultrasound (McGee 2002) may help. Some patients have received ultrasound treatment for many years and continue to maintain good skin quality and reduction in nodules. However, ultrasound therapy has not been subject to any formal trials. There is no clinical evidence to support their use or, conversely, to suggest that it may be harmful.

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### Appendix Two

#### An estimate of the potential medicine costs (and any additional costs)

NUH and SFHT will use Britannia Pharmaceutical for support with APO-go<sup>®</sup> products and Ever Pharma UK Ltd for support with Dacepton<sup>®</sup> products. The cost in Secondary care includes the services of a specialist nurse who performs the Apomorphine response test on each new patient and provides training for nursing staff. This also includes:

- APO-go<sup>®</sup> Infusion pump plus syringes
- APO-go<sup>®</sup> pen needles
- APO- go<sup>®</sup> POD

Average annual NHS costs per patient:

- APO-go<sup>®</sup> penject system: £3,500
- APO-go<sup>®</sup> pre-filled syringe/ampoules (infusion): £5,500
- APO-go<sup>®</sup> POD cartridge for infusion: £5.500
- Neria<sup>®</sup> tubing (£48.16 per pack of 10): £1,758

The addition of Dacepton<sup>®</sup> products to the formulary offers similar drug acquisition cost to existing APO-go<sup>®</sup> preparations (as above), but potentially lower cost to the NHS as the products have longer shelf-life stability, therefore, allowing for a reduction in wastage. Since pumps could be refilled less frequently, rather than daily as for APO-go<sup>®</sup> or 48 hours for APO-go<sup>®</sup> POD. Dacepton<sup>®</sup> also has the benefit of reduced District Nurse time as the number of visits could potentially be reduced.

The optimal daily dosage of apomorphine varies considerably between patients; not all patients stay on one presentation for a full 12 months, which leads to a slight difference in suggested average costs from company data and the range below. The drug costs are therefore most meaningfully expressed as a range rather than as an average.

#### Intermittent subcutaneous apomorphine using APO-go<sup>®</sup> Pen 10mg/ml solution for injection or Dacepton<sup>®</sup> 10mg/ml cartridges for injection (delivered via D-Mine Pen)

Daily use	Daily Dose	Weekly	Annually
		1/2 x 3ml Pen	Up to 15mg
1 x 3ml Pen	Up to 30mg	£173.46	£9019.92

Costing based on 48- hour expiry of APO-go pen versus the 15- day expiry of Dacepton<sup>®</sup> pen means that doses between 6mg-12mg could offer annual savings of £2,714 - £929 respectively. Average: £1,821

#### Continuous subcutaneous apomorphine using APO-go<sup>®</sup> 5mg/ml solution for infusion in Pre-filled Syringe or Dacepton 5mg/ml solution for infusion vials

Daily use	Daily Dose	Weekly cost	Annual cost
		1 x Pre-filled Syringe	Up to 50mg
2 x Pre-filled	Up to	£204.68	£10643.36

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Syringe	100mg		
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The 24-hour expiry of Apo-go® Pre-filled syringe versus 7-day expiry of Dacepton® solution infusion means that doses between 64-80mg can offer annual savings of approximately £3,888-£2,229 respectively. Average savings: £3,058

Apo-go® POD cartridges last for up to 48 hours (PF syringes only last for 24 hours) – less waste/ discarded apomorphine compared to Apo-go. The concentration of APO- go® POD and Apo-go® is the same and therefore same mg/ml cost. Apo-go® POD is easier device to set up and use;no liquid transfer and fewer consumables/ less plastic so slightly more environmentally friendly

**Continuous subcutaneous apomorphine using APO-go ampoules**

Daily use	Daily Dose	Weekly	Annual
		£102.34	£5321.68
1 x 5ml ampoule	Up to 50mg		
2 x 5ml ampoule	Up to 100mg	£204.68	£10643.36

Source: Prices quoted are exclusive of VAT. Drug Tariff (accessed online July 2023).

**An estimate of the potential medicine costs (and any additional costs) to Secondary care**  
 Apomorphine in Secondary care is equivalent to NHS price (as above) plus VAT.

## Appendix Three

### Domperidone cardiac effects and use of concomitant medicines.

#### **Commonly prescribed drugs which can prolong the QT interval include:**

SSRIs (including citalopram, sertraline, venlafaxine)

Quinolones (including Ciprofloxacin, levofloxacin)

Ondansetron

Midodrine

Antipsychotics (including risperidone, quetiapine)

However, practitioners are advised to consult: <http://www.sads.org.uk/drugs-to-avoid/> for up-to-date guidance.

#### **Potent CYP3A4 enzyme inhibitors (that may increase domperidone levels) include:**

Clarithromycin

Telithromycin

Itraconazole

Ketoconazole

HIV protease inhibitors (eg atazanavir, darunavir, ritonavir).

Full guidance on domperidone restrictions can be found in the SmPC at [www.medicines.org.uk](http://www.medicines.org.uk),

or at <https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/domperidone-risks-of-cardiac-side-effects>.

or at [MHRA 2016 apomorphine and domperidone minimizing cardiac effects](#)

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Version Control- Management Of Parkinson's Disease (PD) With Apomorphine – Shared Care Protocol Agreement			
Version	Author(s)	Date	Changes
5.0	<p>Vimbayi Mushayi – Specialist Interface and Medicine Optimisation Pharmacist</p> <p>In consultation with Dr N Silva Consultant Neurologist Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust</p> <p>Clair Mace Parkinsons Disease Specialist Nurse Nottingham University Hospital NHS Trust</p>	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added standard header and version control.</li> <li>• Removed footer.</li> <li>• Added a link to MHRA Domperidone safety alert 2014 and MHRA safety update 2016 on minimising cardiac risk with apomorphine and domperidone.</li> <li>• Added new APO-go® POD 5 mg/ml solution for infusion in cartridge information.</li> <li>• Added a statement about contraindications with 5HT<sub>3</sub> antagonist as per SPC.</li> <li>• Added a statement about referring to the SPC for full list of contraindications, precautions and interactions.</li> <li>• Added information about what the manufacturer will provide and what needs to be prescribed by GP.</li> <li>• Added information about APO-go POD battery life.</li> <li>• Updated references.</li> <li>• Added Apo-go POD costs and advantages over Apo-go prefilled syringes.</li> <li>• Updated links and added link to MHRA safety alert 2016.</li> <li>• Deleted statement regarding injection angles</li> </ul>