

Medicines Management FAQs

Should I switch patients from Vitamin B12 injections onto oral treatment or delay injections?

The British Society of Haematology (BSH) have updated their advice about vitamin B12 replacement during the Covid-19 pandemic. They now no longer advise delaying replacement and instead suggest that patients should be contacted when their B12 is due, screened for Covid symptoms, and assessed for suitability to attend the practice. If they have no symptoms and are able to attend the surgery then they should have their injection as normal. If it is not safe for the patient to attend the surgery then oral supplementation should be offered as a short term option until regular IM hydroxocobalamin can be resumed, i.e. once GP surgeries are able to do so safely, aiming to have a shortest possible break from regular injections.

There are no licensed oral preparations of vitamin B12 at high enough strengths to be effective. Therefore, wherever possible we would recommend continuing with the licensed hydroxocobalamin injections. To be as effective as IM hydroxocobalamin; patients would need to take between 1,000 and 2,000 micrograms of oral cyanocobalamin per day. This can only be obtained by using unlicensed nutritional supplements which have not undergone the strict regulatory assurance processes that licensed medicines have to comply with.

Prescribing unlicensed products carries extra liability for the prescriber in the event of treatment failure or adverse effects and should be restricted for patients for which there is no alternative.

If you do choose to prescribe an unlicensed supplement, you should inform the patient that it is unlicensed and document their consent. We suggest using the "CyanocoB12 1mg tablets (TriOn Pharma)" brand as we have confirmed stock availability through the major pharmacy wholesalers. This is not on the clinical systems and will have to be prescribed as a free text drug in packs of 50 tablets.

Patients should be advised to monitor their symptoms and should contact their GP if they begin to experience neurological or neuropsychiatric symptoms such as pins and needles, numbness, problem with memory or concentration or irritability.

<https://pernicious-anaemia-society.org/pernicious-anaemia/bsh-guidance-on-b12-changed/>

<https://b-s-h.org.uk/media/18275/bsh-guidance-b12-replacement-covid-1901052020finalv.pdf>