

NHS England Guidance: Medicines of Low Value

CO-PROXAMOL

Summary

All formulations of Co-proxamol are **non-formulary** in NHS Waltham Forest CCG.

- New Patients: Prescribers should not initiate co-proxamol for any new patients
- Existing patients: Patients established on co-proxamol should be reviewed with a view to changing the analgesic to a **safer** alternative- (see deprescribing advice)
- **There are no patient exceptionalities identified**

NHS England category: Products of low clinical effectiveness, where there is a lack of robust evidence of clinical effectiveness or there are significant safety concerns.

The license for co-proxamol was withdrawn globally in 2005 due to concerns about the high incidence of suicide (1). The toxic effects of dextropropoxyphene on respiration or cardiac function are usually the cause of death (2). As with all unlicensed medication, all liability for patients continuing to take co-proxamol lies with the prescriber.

Deprescribing advice

- Carry out a review of patients still being prescribed co-proxamol with a view to changing to an alternative pain management regime explaining the following to the patient:
 - There are safety risks associated with co-proxamol: cardiac side effects even at therapeutic doses.
 - The NHS are likely to blacklist co-proxamol therefore, it will no longer be available on the NHS.
- Assess the patient and use a pain score using the Brief Pain Inventory ([please click here](#)).
- Switch the patient to paracetamol 500 mg tablets, at a dose of 1 gram up to four times daily (when required) and consider if a weak opioid (codeine phosphate- the BNF recommends a dose of 30-60mg every four hours when necessary) is required.
- Alternatively, and if safe and appropriate, consider a switch to co-codamol 15mg/500mg tablets. Bear in mind that the elderly are more susceptible to the side-effects of opioids.
- Review this in one month, assess again using the Brief Pain Inventory ([please click here](#)) and titrate up the weak opioid if necessary to achieve a similar or improved pain score as co-proxamol.

References

1. **MHRA.** Safety warnings, alerts and recalls for medicines: Co-proxamol. . [Online] 11 2007. <https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/co-proxamol-withdrawal-reminder-to-prescribers>.

2. **Office for National Statistics.** *Statistical Bulletin: Deaths Related to Drug Poisoning in England and Wales, 2011.* s.l. : 09, 2012.

