



# Medicine Supply Notification

MSN/2024/061

Nortriptyline 10mg/5ml and 25mg/5ml oral solution sugar-free

Tier 2 – medium impact\*

Date of issue: 23/05/2024

Link: [Medicines Supply Tool](#)

## Summary

- Nortriptyline 10mg/5ml oral solution sugar-free has been discontinued; all supplies have now been exhausted.
- Nortriptyline 25mg/5ml oral solution sugar-free will be discontinued from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024.
- Nortriptyline 10mg and 25mg tablets remain available and can support increased demand.
- Amitriptyline 10mg/5ml and 25mg/5ml oral solution sugar-free remain available and can support increased demand.
- Unlicensed specials of nortriptyline 10mg/5ml and 25mg/5ml oral suspension sugar-free are available, lead times vary.

## Actions Required

Where there are insufficient supplies of nortriptyline 10mg/5ml or 25mg/5ml oral solution sugar-free and patients do not have swallowing difficulties consider prescribing:

- nortriptyline 10mg or 25mg tablets.

Where patients have swallowing difficulties or enteral feeding tubes consider:

- prescribing nortriptyline 10mg or 25mg tablets, counselling patients on crushing tablets and dispersing in water (off-label; see supporting information); or
- consider prescribing unlicensed specials of nortriptyline oral suspension (see supporting information); or
- if the above options are not appropriate, consider prescribing amitriptyline 10mg/5ml or 25mg/5ml oral solution sugar-free, ensuring patients are counselled on the change in medicine, dose, and to report any side effects to their prescriber (see supporting information);
- other antidepressants can be considered if amitriptyline is not suitable.

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

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

## Supporting information

Nortriptyline is licensed for use in depression and is used in practice for neuropathic pain (off-label). Nortriptyline is the principle active metabolite of amitriptyline and has similar actions to that of amitriptyline. It is less sedating compared to amitriptyline.

### Advice on switching to amitriptyline oral solution

The clinical alternative to nortriptyline is amitriptyline in patients who have not tried amitriptyline previously. Amitriptyline is licensed for depression and neuropathic pain. Amitriptyline 60mg is approximately equivalent to nortriptyline 50mg. If the clinical decision is made to switch from nortriptyline to amitriptyline, a direct switch, i.e. stopping one medicine and then starting the new medicine the following day, is normally possible.

There may be an increased risk of anticholinergic burden when switching patients from nortriptyline to amitriptyline. Monitor for anticholinergic side effects such as dry mouth, constipation, urinary retention.

### Advice on crushing nortriptyline oral tablets

Nortriptyline tablets can be crushed and dispersed in water for administration in patients with swallowing difficulties or enteral feeding tubes (off-label). Note: if administered directly into the jejunum using an NJ, PEJ, PEGJ tube then monitor for increase in side effects.

### Advice on neuropathic pain

For neuropathic pain, [NICE CG173](#) recommends amitriptyline, duloxetine, gabapentin or pregabalin as treatment options in adults. Specialist advice may be needed if the patient has tried these options already or are under a specialist team.

### Guidance on ordering and prescribing unlicensed medicines

The following Specials manufacturers have confirmed they can manufacture nortriptyline 10mg/5ml and/or 25mg/5ml oral suspension sugar-free (please note there may be other companies that can also manufacture supplies):

- Eaststone 10mg/5ml
- Target Healthcare 10mg/5ml and 25mg/5ml
- Nova Laboratories 10mg/5ml and 25mg/5ml
- IPS Pharma 10mg/5ml and 25mg/5ml
- Rokshaw Laboratories 10mg/5ml and 25mg/5ml

Any decision to prescribe an unlicensed medicine must consider the relevant guidance and NHS Trust or local governance procedures. Unlicensed imports do not undergo any central quality assessment or suitability evaluation. Therefore, any import must be locally assessed in line with local unlicensed medicines processes.

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),

### Links to further information

[SmPC Nortriptyline 10mg/5ml oral solution](#)

[SmPC Nortriptyline 25mg/5ml oral solution](#)

[BNF: Tricyclic and related antidepressant drugs](#)

[BNF Nortriptyline](#)

[SmPC Amitriptyline oral solution](#)

[BNF Amitriptyline](#)

## Enquiries

If you have any queries, please contact [DHSCmedicinesupplyteam@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:DHSCmedicinesupplyteam@dhsc.gov.uk).