

Rifampicin containing medicines

Information for patients

What is happening?

There is currently a national shortage of the medicine rifampicin and all tablet, capsule, and liquid preparations that contain rifampicin, sometimes in combination with other medicines. The names of some of these combination medicines include Rifinah and Rifater. This supply shortage is expected to last at least until the end of 2025.

Due to this shortage, licensed supplies of medicines containing rifampicin are currently limited in the UK and therefore the NHS will need to use supplies that are unlicensed.

Drug companies must have a product licence, sometimes known as a Marketing Authorisation, to advertise and sell a medicine. In the UK, this is granted by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). An unlicensed medicine does not have a licence for use in the UK.

The products which will be used instead of the UK licensed versions during this shortage have a licence in another country, and will only be supplied by the NHS when the UK licensed versions are not available.

There are procedures in place to support the safe use of unlicensed medicines by NHS Lothian. This ensures that we are satisfied that they are safe and effective alternatives to the licensed versions during this shortage.

Unlicensed medicines may have packaging in multiple languages and are always supplied with patient information in English.

What will change?

- You will receive up to one month's supply at any one time of your rifampicin containing medicines, plus any other medicines that may make up part of the overall treatment for your infection. This is to help us manage supplies during the shortage.
- During your treatment course, the supply you receive at each visit may be a different brand. This may vary between licensed and unlicensed brands of the medicines that you are prescribed, depending on what is currently available to us. This should not impact the effectiveness of your overall treatment course.
- The colour, shape and size of the tablets or capsules may be different. You may also be switched onto a different form of a medicine (such as a liquid preparation) and the medicine packaging may also vary. **Always follow the directions on the label(s) for how to take your medicine(s).**
- Please contact the hospital pharmacy once you have only 7 days of medication remaining to check when your next supply will be ready for collection.

Will there be any side effects when I switch to a different version of my medicines?

As the medicines themselves are not changing (unless you have been advised that this is the case by a healthcare professional), we would expect very little change in any side effects that you might currently be experiencing.

Occasionally some people may experience minor side effects when they take a different version of a medicine that they have taken previously, but these should settle down. If you notice any side effects of concern to you, please get in touch with your hospital clinic.

If you have any questions about your rifampicin containing medicines, or any of your medicines, please contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Contact:

Telephone number: