Medicine Supply Notification

Alendronic acid 70mg tablets
Tier 2 – medium impact*
Date of issue: 14/07/2022
Link: Medicines Supply Tool

Summary

- Alendronic acid 70mg tablets are out of stock until late-August 2022.
- Risedronate sodium 35mg tablets (weekly) and ibandronic acid 150mg tablets (monthly) remain available. Where these are not suitable, unlicensed supplies of alendronic acid 70mg tablets may be sourced, lead times vary.

Actions Required

Where patients have insufficient supplies to last until the re-supply date, clinicians should:

- consider reviewing the need for bisphosphonate treatment based on national guidance (see supporting information);
- consider prescribing risedronate 35mg once weekly tablets, check that the patient is not intolerant to any of the excipients and is counselled on dose and administration (see supporting information below);
- if the above is unsuitable consider prescribing ibandronic acid 150mg once monthly tablets, ensuring that this is a suitable dose regimen for the patient, no intolerance to any of the excipients and ensure the patient understands the counselling provided on the once monthly dose regimen and administration (see supporting information); and
- if none of the above is appropriate consider prescribing unlicensed weekly alendronic acid 70mg.

Prescribers should work with local pharmacy teams to ensure orders are placed within appropriate time frames as lead times may vary (see supporting information below).

Supporting information

Clinical Information

Licensed indication and dosing

Alendronic acid 70mg tablets are licensed in adults for the treatment of postmenopausal osteoporosis. The recommended dosage is one 70mg tablet once weekly taken at least 30 minutes before the first food, beverage, or medicinal product of the day with plain water only. The only other licensed weekly formulation of a bisphosphonate is risedronate 35 mg tablets, which also needs to be administered as recommended for alendronate.

A monthly bisphosphonate formulation is also available: ibandronic acid, which is recommended to be taken after an overnight fast (at least 6 hours) and 1 hour before the first food or drink (other than water) of the day or any other oral medicinal products or supplementation (including calcium).

*Classification of Tiers can be found at the following link:
If considering switching patients from a weekly to a monthly oral bisphosphonate, ensure that adherence will not be affected, as some patients may find it more difficult to remember to take a monthly tablet, when accustomed to a weekly regimen of alendronic acid.

**Guidance**

The National Osteoporosis Guidance Group (NOGG)* recommends that after 5 years of bisphosphonate treatment, re-assess fracture risk. Longer durations of treatment, for at least 10 years, are recommended in certain high risk groups. After 10 years of treatment, the decision regarding ongoing management must be made on an individual basis, in careful consultation with the patient, and specialist advice may need to be sought. Refer to guidance for further information on risk assessment.

Please click on the following links for further information:

- BNF alendronic acid
- NICE guidance: Osteoporosis
- SmPC risedronate acid 35mg tablets
- BNF bisphosphonate
- SmPC alendronic acid
- SmPC ibandronic acid 150mg tablets

**Guidance on ordering and prescribing unlicensed imports**

The following specialist importers have confirmed they can source unlicensed alendronic acid 70mg tablets (please note there may be other companies that can also source supplies):

- Smartway Pharmaceuticals Limited
- Target Healthcare

Any decision to prescribe an unlicensed medicine must consider the relevant guidance and NHS Trust or local governance procedures. 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),

When prescribing a product that is not licensed in the UK due to a supply issue with the licensed alternative prescribers must indicate on the FP10 prescription that an unlicensed product is required. This can be done in one of the following two ways:

- Electronic prescriptions – if the required unlicensed product is shown on electronic prescribing systems, GPs should select:
  - Alendronic 70mg tablets (Special Order)
- Paper prescriptions – where the unlicensed product is not shown on electronic prescribing systems, GPs should use a paper prescription and annotate with the following wording: "special order".

**Enquiries**

If you have any queries, please contact DHScmedicinesupplyteam@dhsc.gov.uk.