

Principles when Prescribing and Switching Liquid Medication Preparations and Strengths

(This information is intended for use by Prescribers in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire)

Background

There have been local incidents recently involving strength and dosing of liquid preparations, highlighting the need for extra care when prescribing them.

Any change in liquid strength must be reflected in the dose:



General considerations:

- Ensure prescribing and specified strengths are in line with APC recommendations.
- Determine whether the change in prescription is due to a planned reduction/increase in dose or due to supply issues and therefore an alternative product is required.
- Always query any ambiguity and double check the strength and units prescribed.
- Use the system formularies and dose directions on clinical systems to support prescribing.
- **DO NOT** click through OptimiseRx messages without taking a moment to review them. OptimiseRx messages include important safety warnings about liquid concentrations.

Specific prescription considerations:

- Ensure only suitably qualified staff are involved in making any alterations to liquid preparation prescriptions.
- Always double check the strength and units prescribed.
- Doses should be written to include **both the dose and volume** in the dosage instructions.
 - E.g., Take 5ml (25mg) once daily.
 - This reduces the risk of dose error where more than one strength of liquid is available.
- When switching, always double check the calculation, e.g.:
 - Repeat the calculation of the strength.
 - And/or ask a colleague to double check.
 - And/or complete the calculation via a different method.
- Direct the use of an oral syringe for any dose less than 5ml.
- Highlight a change in strength/dose with the community pharmacy.
- **DISCUSS** change in strength/dose with the patient so they are aware.

Using Standardised Strengths of Unlicensed Liquid Medicines in Children:

- When children require unlicensed liquid medications, they should receive the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health ([RCPCH](#)) / Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacy Group ([NPPG](#)) recommended strength, where one exists. There are currently 13 such recommended strengths, 12 of which are published in relevant drug monographs of the BNF for Children.
- These have been adopted locally and are on the Nottinghamshire Joint Formulary.
- [SPS - using standardised liquids in children](#)

Actions for practices:

- Discuss process for switching liquid preparations at your next clinical meeting to raise awareness with the whole team, including the need to counsel patients.
- Review practice prescribing policy to ensure it includes detailed process for prescribing and switching liquid medications.