

Position Statement: Self-care with Vitamin D3 (colecalciferol) for maintenance or prevention of deficiency

As part of its self-care strategy, in line with [National Guidance](#), NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB does not support the prescribing of Vitamin D3 (colecalciferol) for maintenance or prevention of deficiency.

This includes for all residents within care home settings.

Patients should be advised to purchase these products over the counter (OTC).

Recommendations:

- Vitamin D3 (colecalciferol) can be easily purchased from a pharmacy, supermarkets or online retailers and patients should be encouraged to buy supplements for maintenance or to prevent vitamin D deficiency.
- Prescriptions for vitamin D3 should be reserved only for patients who require the treatment and/or meet the criteria for prescribing – [see below](#).
- Note that patients who are deficient should be prescribed a loading dose (treatment to correct vitamin D deficiency), but subsequent maintenance doses and ongoing supplementation should then be purchased OTC as per APC vitamin D guidelines for [adults](#) and [children](#).
- **Patients currently prescribed colecalciferol (generic or brand) up to 2000units / 50micrograms per day should be moved to self-care unless they meet any of the criteria for prescribing listed [below](#).**
- Being in a care home is not an exemption from self-care and residents should not be prescribed vitamin D unless they meet one or more of the prescribing criteria listed below. For residents who do not meet the prescribing criteria, care homes should consider other options for providing vitamin D supplements to their eligible residents such as purchasing their own supplies or asking eligible residents, or an appropriate representative of that resident (i.e. relative, next of kin, lasting power of attorney (LPA) for health), to purchase an appropriate supplement. Further support for managing vitamin D in care home residents is available ([Guidance on Vitamin D as Self-Care for Adult Care Home Residents](#)).
- **Free Healthy Start vitamins are available for those on the Healthy Start scheme* for pregnant patients or children between the ages 6 months to their fourth birthday.**
*People need to be claiming certain benefits to qualify for the Healthy Start scheme or be pregnant and under 18. (NB this is not on prescription but commissioned separately). More information can be obtained from <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>.
- Prescribers should advise patients on safe and effective self-care measures to maintain/improve vitamin D levels through lifestyle and by directing them to appropriate sources of information e.g. [NHS Website](#), [Notts APC Vitamin D self-care leaflet](#) and [The Self Care Forum](#).
- Patients can seek advice directly with the Community Pharmacist or via referral from the GP Surgery using the minor illness self-care advice and over the counter sales part of Pharmacy First. The advantage of the Pharmacy First referral is that the outcome of the consultation is sent to the GP surgery so that this can be included in the GP patient record.
- See Notts APC [Vitamin D Management in Adults](#) and [Vitamin D Management in Children](#) for prescribing advice and patient information.

Prescribing is appropriate for:

- Patients with a medically diagnosed deficiency, who have a lifelong or chronic condition or have undergone surgery that results in malabsorption. Continuing need should however be reviewed on a regular basis.
Note that after loading, subsequent **maintenance** doses should be purchased OTC unless one of the other prescribing criteria in this list applies.
Note that following bariatric surgery vitamin D **maintenance** dose should be continued and purchased OTC – see local [bariatric surgery guidance](#).
- Patients receiving combined preparations of calcium and vitamin D or vitamin D alone for osteoporosis or osteopenia.
- Other excluded groups include patients treated for hyperparathyroidism, hypercalcaemia and patients receiving parenteral osteoporosis treatment.
- Patients with malnutrition including alcoholism (see [NICE guidance](#)).
- Patients receiving prescription-only vitamin D analogues such as alfacalcidol or calcifediol.
- Note that the general exception criteria in the NHSE guidance do not apply to vitamin D.
- See [Table 2 in Appendix 4 within the local vitamin D prescribing guidelines](#) for the product choice.

Rationale:

- Vitamin D is a food supplement.
- Vitamin D supplements can be bought easily and are inexpensive.
- Maintenance vitamin D treatment is recommended in PHE guidance, but the guidance contains no indication that this needs to be prescribed.

References

NHS England, NHS Clinical Commissioners. Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in Primary Care

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care> (accessed online June 2023)