

Date 03/04/2026
Your Ref
Our Ref 11221

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Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – PRESCRIBING POLICY

I write in response to your request for information in relation to NHS Lothian's Prescribing Policy.

Question:

1. The Board's current policy, guideline, protocol, RICaD, shared-care agreement, formulary statement, or any other document relating to the prescribing of liothyronine (T3), whether as monotherapy or in combination with levothyroxine.

Answer:

Formulary - The East Region Formulary has the following:

- Adults - Treatment of hypothyroid coma - Liothyronine (specialist use only) - Liothyronine 20microgram solution for injection ampoules - Dose 5-20 micrograms by slow intravenous injection, repeated every 12 hours or as often as every 4 hours if necessary
 - Prescribing Notes: Liothyronine injection is given by slow intravenous injection to treat hypothyroid coma.
 - <https://www.formulary.nhs.scot/east/endocrine-system/thyroid-and-parathyroid-disease/hypothyroidism/?m=treatment-of-hypothyroid-coma>
- Adults - Treatment of hypothyroidism - Levothyroxine
 - Prescribing Notes:
 - Prior to treatment it is important to establish that TSH is elevated thus confirming primary hypothyroidism. A normal or low TSH suggests pituitary or hypothalamic disease for which specialist referral is necessary.
 - Thyroid stimulating hormone should be checked 6 weeks after starting levothyroxine or after any change in dose, then annually once stable.
 - Be aware of clinical and subclinical hypothyroidism in women of child bearing age, women who are pregnant or planning pregnancy have specific monitoring requirements.

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Chair Professor John Connaghan CBE
Chief Executive Professor Caroline Hiscox
Lothian NHS Board is the common name of Lothian Health Board

- If a patient reports persistent symptoms when switching between different levothyroxine tablet formulations, consider consistently prescribing a specific product known to be well tolerated by the patient (specify the name of the manufacturer on the prescription). If problems persist seek specialist advice.
 - Ideally to be taken 30-60 minutes before breakfast, caffeinated drinks and other medication.
 - In a very small proportion of patients, liothyronine may be indicated for the treatment of hypothyroidism, usually in combination with levothyroxine. Treatment with liothyronine should only be initiated and adjusted under the advice and ongoing supervision of an endocrinologist. When the specialist initiates therapy they should clarify a plan for monitoring blood tests and reviewing the patient, usually within 3 months of initiation of treatment. Once stable the patient should only require annual blood tests.
 - <https://www.formulary.nhs.scot/east/endocrine-system/thyroid-and-parathyroid-disease/hypothyroidism/?m=treatment-of-hypothyroidism>
- Children - Treatment of hypothyroid coma - Liothyronine (specialist use only) - Liothyronine 20microgram solution for injection ampoules - For dose, refer to BNF for Children and follow specialist advice.
 - Prescribing Notes: Liothyronine injection is given by slow intravenous injection to treat hypothyroid coma.
 - <https://www.formulary.nhs.scot/east/endocrine-system/thyroid-and-parathyroid-disease/hypothyroidism/?m=c-treatment-of-hypothyroid-coma>

Shared care - Procedure for the shared care of medicines - no specific medicines mentioned, summarises the principles to support the sharing of care when medicines are involved

- <https://policyonline.nhslothian.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Shared%20Care%20of%20Medicines.pdf>

Question:

2. Any equality impact assessment (EIA) or equality-related analysis carried out in relation to liothyronine prescribing or changes to liothyronine policy.

Answer:

Equality impact assessments are not a requirement for the appraisal of individual medicines within formulary governance. Clinical effectiveness, cost effectiveness and comparative safety should be described for a defined patient group. Clinicians wishing to prescribe a medicine for a patient outwith formulary approval are referred to the Procedure for prescribing non-formulary medicines, guiding them to consider the appropriateness of prescribing for the individual

- <https://policyonline.nhslothian.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Procedures%20for%20Prescribing%20Non-Formulary%20Medicines.pdf>

The linked information is exempt under Section 25 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 - Information otherwise accessible

(1) Information which the applicant can reasonably obtain other than by requesting it under section 1(1) is exempt information.

I hope the information provided helps with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal. If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the FOI Reviewer at the email address at the head of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.

FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: <https://org.nhsllothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing
Cc: Chief Executive