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Medicine Supply Notification: Permethrin 5% w/w cream

Tier 2 – medium impact*
Date of issue: 08/09/2023

[Medicines Supply Tool – SPS - Specialist Pharmacy Service – The first stop for professional medicines advice](#)

Summary

- Permethrin 5% w/w cream is in limited supply until further notice due to an increase in demand.
- Unlicensed supplies of permethrin 5% cream may be sourced, lead times vary.
- Malathion liquid, an alternative to permethrin for treatment of scabies, is currently unavailable.
- Crotamiton 10% Cream (Eurax), which is licensed for the treatment of scabies, remains available but can only meet its current demand for other conditions.
- Benzyl benzoate 25% topical emulsion can be sourced from special-order manufacturers; this is an unlicensed medicine.
- Ivermectin 3mg tablets are licensed for treatment of scabies but are not currently marketed in the UK. Unlicensed supplies of ivermectin 3mg tablets may be sourced, lead times vary.

Actions Required

Clinicians in primary and secondary care should refer to UKHSA guidance [UKHSA guidance on the management of scabies cases and outbreaks in long-term care facilities and other closed settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) on the management of scabies cases and outbreaks in long-term care facilities and other closed settings including the appropriate infection prevention and control measures with advice on cleaning of clothing and bedding.

Where scabies has been diagnosed and where individuals have been confirmed as contacts*, UKHSA has advised that:

- Existing stock of permethrin 5% cream should be reserved for these patients.
- In secondary care, where there are insufficient stocks, the organisation may request mutual aid, facilitated by their Regional Pharmacy Procurement Specialist.
- If licensed permethrin 5% cream is unavailable, prescribe unlicensed permethrin 5 % cream.
- Where permethrin 5% cream is unavailable, consider prescribing unlicensed special-order benzyl benzoate 25% emulsion if locally available.
- If both alternatives are unavailable, consider prescribing unlicensed ivermectin 3mg tablets.
- For all unlicensed alternatives, prescribers should work with local pharmacy teams to ensure orders are placed with special-order manufacturers within appropriate time frames as lead times may vary.

For further details on alternatives see Supporting Information below. Patients and close contacts should receive counselling on how to apply the product, the frequency and duration of treatment

Contacts are defined as anyone who has close physical contact with the case without appropriate PPE, for example, providing personal care with skin-to-skin contact, sharing a room or other similar household setting, and sexual partners, within the 8 weeks prior to diagnosis

Supporting information

Product	UK license	Indication	Method of application	Comments
Permethrin 5% w/w cream	Yes	Treatment of scabies for adults and children 2 months of age and above.	~90% individuals cured after single application. If there are no signs of original lesions healing or if new lesions have appeared, second application can be made not less than 7 days after first application.	First line agent. Considered suitable for use in pregnancy and breastfeeding.
Benzyl benzoate 25% w/v Application Cutaneous Emulsion	No (but licensed in Republic of Ireland (RoI)) Available from special-order manufacturers (see guidance on ordering and prescribing below)	Treatment of scabies in adults, children and infants.	Applied to entire body at night from soles of feet, omitting head and neck (although BNF considers that application should be extended to scalp, neck, face, and ears), for 2 consecutive nights. It is left in place for 8-12 hours on each night and may be followed by a repeated application at night 7 days later. It may be diluted with equal quantity of water for older children and with three parts of water for infants to minimise risk of irritation, although this also reduces efficacy.	Generally, no longer recommended as not as effective as permethrin or malathion and may cause skin irritation. The SmPC for the licensed RoI product states although no studies on effects on human pregnancy or lactation have been carried out, drug is for topical use and is unlikely to represent a hazard to the pregnant or lactating patient. Irritant to eyes and mucous membranes and may be irritant to skin. Hypersensitivity reactions have been reported. Systemic symptoms have been reported following excessive topical use. BNF advises avoid in children.
Ivermectin 3mg tablets	Licensed product is not currently marketed in the UK but unlicensed imports available.	Treatment of human sarcoptic scabies. Treatment is justified when the diagnosis of scabies has	The recommended dosage is a single oral dose to provide ivermectin 200 microgram/kg body weight (e.g. 12mg [4 tablets] for a 60kg patient).	Note: Ivermectin tablets are now a licensed product, although sources like the BNF, CKS, and UKHSA guidance have yet to update to reflect this, and still describe oral ivermectin as an unlicensed product.

		<p>been established clinically and/or by parasitological examination. Without formal diagnosis treatment is not justified in cases of pruritus</p>	<p><u>Common scabies</u> Recovery will be considered as definite only after 4 weeks from the treatment. Persistence of pruritus or scraping lesions does not justify a second treatment before this date.</p> <p>Administration of a second dose within 2 weeks after the initial dose should only be considered:</p> <p>a) when new specific lesions occur, b) when the parasitologic examination is positive at this date.</p> <p><u>Profuse and crusting scabies</u> In these heavily infected forms, a second dose within 8 to 15 days of ivermectin and/or concomitant topical therapy may be necessary to obtain recovery.</p>	<p>Link to Summary of Product Characteristics Microsoft Word - 2393664064540914518_spc-doc.doc (windows.net)</p>
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Guidance on ordering and prescribing unlicensed imports

The following specialist importers have confirmed they can source unlicensed permethrin 5% cream (please note there may be other companies that can also source supplies):

- Orifarm

The following special-order manufacturers have confirmed they can manufacture unlicensed benzyl benzoate emulsion (please note there may be other companies that can also source supplies):

- Eaststone
- 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)

Clinical expertise sought from NHS Specialist Pharmacy Service, NHSE Antimicrobial Stewardship Leads and UKHSA Health Protection Teams.

Links:

- SPC Permethrin 5% w/w Cream [Permethrin 5% w/w Cream - Summary of Product Characteristics \(SmPC\) - \(emc\) \(medicines.org.uk\)](#)
- BNF – Drugs for scabies and head lice [Drugs for scabies and head lice | Nurse Prescribers' Formulary | BNF | NICE](#)
- UKHSA guidance on the management of scabies cases and outbreaks in long-term care facilities and other closed settings [UKHSA guidance on the management of scabies cases and outbreaks in long-term care facilities and other closed settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- CKS: Scabies [Scabies | Health topics A to Z | CKS | NICE](#)
- BASHH 2016 UK National Guideline on the Management of Scabies [scabies-2016.pdf \(bashhguidelines.org\)](#)
- European guideline for the management of scabies [European guideline for the management of scabies \(wiley.com\)](#)
- American Academy of Dermatology Association. Scabies: diagnosis and treatment [Scabies: Diagnosis and treatment \(aad.org\)](#)
- Health Products Regulatory Authority: Datasheet benzyl benzoate [Licence PA0206-023-001_04042019125313.pdf \(hpra.ie\)](#)
- Ivermectin 3mg tablets [Microsoft Word - 2393664064540914518_spc-doc.doc \(windows.net\)](#)