**Suggested Template Letter from General Practice/ Specialist to Patients within the NHS SEL CCG, on changing 10mg methotrexate tablets to 2.5 mg tablets (for patients on ‘low dose’ i.e. ≤ 25mg) to improve on the safety of methotrexate prescriptions**

[*Practice name]*

*[Address]*

*[Tel]*

*[Email]*

*[Date]*

*[Title/Initial/Surname]*

*[Patient Address Block]*

Dear ***[Title] [Surname]*,**

**Re: Change to the strength of your prescribed methotrexate tablets**

As your practice GP, we have recently reviewed your medicines and are making a change to the strength of methotrexate tablets we prescribe you. You have been receiving a total dose of xxxxx prescribed as 10mg strength tablets *[*and 2.5mg tablets ***\*delete as appropriate****].* When your next prescription is issued, we will prescribe the same dose as 2.5mg strength tablets. This means, to make up the same dose, you will need to take xxxxx of the 2.5mg tablets on the same day as you are used to taking your Methotrexate tablets. Your specialist/ GP ***\*delete as appropriate*** is fully aware of this change.

In summary:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Old prescription  **(no longer applicable)** | NEW prescription  **(what you will receive from now on)** |
| [*insert total dose*] as [*insert number of tablets*] of  Methotrexate 10mg tablets  *[*and 2.5mg tablets ***\*delete as appropriate****]* | [*insert total dose*] as [***insert new number of tablets***] of  Methotrexate **2.5mg** tablets |

Please note we are not making any changes to the total dose of your methotrexate prescription.

The 2.5mg tablets need **to be taken ONCE a week** on the same day as you used to take your 10mg tablets. The changes are being made in all GP practices in South East London and will help with patient safety.

We advise that you always check the label on your methotrexate box/ bottle to make sure you are taking the correct dose, as stated on your prescription.

If you are concerned and wish to discuss the matter further, please speak to your specialist at the hospital, doctor at the surgery, practice pharmacist at the surgery or your local community pharmacist, who will also know of this change.

**Template Letter from Secondary Care/ Borough Medicines Teams to General Practitioners within the NHS SEL CCG, on improving safe prescription of ‘low dose’ (i.e ≤ 25mg) Methotrexate**

Dear colleague,

Drug errors with 10 mg tablets of methotrexate can increase the likelihood of a fatal overdose. Methotrexate overdoses are included on the Never Events list. To minimise the risk of an accidental overdose of oral methotrexate the current national guidance is to only prescribe 2.5 mg tablets, and to avoid the prescription of 10 mg tablets or mixed strength prescriptions.

Investigation into deaths attributable to methotrexate have identified 10mg strength prescribing as a consistent theme. It is usually inadvertent dispensing of the 10mg strength that results in harm, as 2.5 and 10mg strength tablets look very similar.

Rates of 10 mg methotrexate prescriptions have dropped significantly in recent years; however, some CCGs continue to see substantial volume of prescribing 10 mg strength methotrexate tablets. As of February 2021, NHS SEL CCG continues to be a high prescriber of 10 mg methotrexate tablets, ranked as the 8th worst CCG for this measure, out of a total of over 135 CCGs within NHS England.

**The NHS South East London CCG Position Statement on Methotrexate 10mg tablets states methotrexate 10mg tablets are not recommended for prescribing by all secondary care prescribers and all primary care prescribers. Prescriptions of 10 mg methotrexate tablets should be avoided entirely, and such prescriptions will be investigated as potential prescribing errors by secondary care and primary care colleagues.**

We appreciate that some patients request the 10mg strength and ask that an informed discussion with the patient on the risks of having 10mg strength tablets is done. This discussion should be documented in the patients’ electronic notes. We are also asking community pharmacy colleagues to have the same discussions with patients who present with a prescription for methotrexate 10mg tablets and hence collaboratively stop 10mg strength tablets being provided to patients across South East London.

The data for individual practises within the CCG, detailing the proportion of methotrexate prescriptions that breech national methotrexate safety guidance, can be viewed on the OpenPrescribing website, at the following address: <https://openprescribing.net/measure/methotrexate/>

We would encourage you to circulate this letter amongst prescribers at your practice and to your local community pharmacy.

Yours sincerely

**Template Letter from Secondary Care/ Borough Medicines Teams to Community Pharmacy within the NHS SEL CCG, on improving safe prescription of ‘low dose’ (i.e ≤ 25mg) Methotrexate**

Dear colleague,

Drug errors with 10 mg tablets of methotrexate can increase the likelihood of a fatal overdose. Methotrexate overdoses are included on the Never Events list. To minimise the risk of an accidental overdose of oral methotrexate the current national guidance is to only prescribe 2.5 mg tablets, and to avoid the prescription of 10 mg tablets or mixed strength prescriptions.

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We appreciate that some patients present with a prescription for methotrexate 10mg tablets and ask that an informed discussion with the patient on the risks of having 10mg strength tablets is done. This discussion should be documented in the patients’ electronic records. We are also asking prescribers in general practice to have the same discussions with patients who request the 10mg strength and hence collaboratively stop 10mg strength tablets being provided to patients across South East London.

The data for individual practises within the CCG, detailing the proportion of methotrexate prescriptions that breech national methotrexate safety guidance, can be viewed on the OpenPrescribing website, at the following address: <https://openprescribing.net/measure/methotrexate/>

We would encourage you to circulate this letter amongst your colleagues in the pharmacy and in your local general practices.

Yours sincerely