

Reducing harm from high-risk medicines

Several adverse incidents involving 'high-risk medicines' have been reported which may have been prevented if there had been greater awareness of the risks associated with the medication.¹ This poster highlights examples of high-risk medicines. However it is not a complete list and you may wish to add other high-risk medicines noted in your pharmacy to the poster.

Actions for community pharmacy:

- ✓ Identify high risk medicines in your pharmacy
- ✓ Ensure they are stored safely
- ✓ Ensure there is a clinical check of all medicines before they are dispensed²
- ✓ Ensure that patients know how to take or use their medicines safely

Narrow therapeutic index

Lithium Theophylline Anti-epileptics
Immunosuppressants e.g. ciclosporin, tacrolimus

Risk of toxicity or serious adverse effects

Insulin Digoxin Methotrexate³
Opioids Hypoglycaemics Cancer medicines

Cardiovascular adverse effects

Diuretics Beta blockers NSAIDs

Risk of bleeding

Heparins e.g. enoxaparin, heparin flush, heparin injection³
Oral Anticoagulants e.g. warfarin, apixaban, dabigatran, rivaroxaban, edoxaban
Antiplatelets e.g. aspirin, clopidogrel, ticagrelor

Other high risk medicines

Red & Amber medicines ⁴
'More than 3' rule⁵
more than three tablets or capsules needed to make up one dose

Other medicines noted in our pharmacy:

Supporting information

1. Saedder EA et al. (2014) Identifying high-risk medication: a systematic literature review. *Eur J Clin Pharmacol* 70:637-645

2. Medicines Safety Matters. (2015) Community Pharmacy Vol 3 Issue 1 <http://primarycare.hscni.net>

3. <http://www.nrls.npsa.nhs.uk/resources/type/alerts/>

4. Interface Pharmacists Network Specialist Medicines (2015) Red Amber List www.ipnsm.hscni.net

5. Medicine Safety Today. The Northern Ireland Medicines Governance Team Newsletter (2015) Issue 50