

Guidance on dealing with Tamoxifen shortage

14th October 2019

Dear Doctor

As you may be aware, there is an on-going intermittent shortage of supply of tamoxifen in Ireland. This is being caused by an international shortage of the active pharmaceutical ingredient. It is not related to Brexit.

The HSE's National Cancer Control Programme and the HPRA have been working to address this, and an additional supply of tamoxifen products has been secured for patients in Ireland. These supplies are exempt medicinal products/unlicensed products. This will ensure that patients do not experience a break in their treatment.

To ensure the continuity of this supply during the shortage period, we are asking GPs and pharmacists to support patients who ask about this. The advice for patients is:

- Alternative supplies of tamoxifen have been secured and they can continue their treatment during this shortage period.
- The usual brands of tamoxifen may not be available but an alternative brand is available.
- Different brands may carry an additional cost for some people – the pharmacy can advise on this.
- Patients have been asked not to stockpile tamoxifen as it may have unintended consequences for other patients' supplies.

Pharmacies have been asked to dispense only one month's supply at a time to all patients to ensure that there is enough for all patients.

The HSE will be providing information to patients via patient advocacy groups and also via the HSE website (www.hse.ie/tamoxifen) and through news media and social media.

If your patient taking tamoxifen presents to you with questions about this, we ask that you support them with the advice above. If for any reason your patient is unable to access any supply of tamoxifen, please advise them to seek an appointment with their treating consultant.

Thank you very much for your co-operation