

Prescribing Hot Topics

Safety
Alert



Drug Safety Update: Hydroxyzine

A recent review by the European Medicines Agency, confirmed that **Hydroxyzine is associated with an increased risk of QT prolongation and Torsade de pointes**. The risk is greatest in those who: concomitantly use medicines that prolong the QT interval; have a history of cardiovascular disease or a family history of sudden cardiac death; have a significant electrolyte imbalance (low potassium or magnesium levels); or have significant bradycardia.

Hydroxyzine is regularly used for the management of pruritus in children and anxiety in adults. **The following guidance has been issued to prescribers:**

- **Hydroxyzine should not be prescribed to those with a prolonged QT interval or who have risk factors for QT interval prolongation** (as above)
- **Avoid use in the elderly** as they are more susceptible to side effects
- **Consider risks of QT interval prolongation/Torsade de Pointes before prescribing to those taking medicines that lower heart rate or potassium levels**
- **Prescribe the lowest effective dose for as short a time as possible**
- Continue to report any suspected side effects of hydroxyzine on a Yellow Card
- **The maximum daily dose of hydroxyzine is now:**
 - 100mg for adults
 - 50mg for the elderly (if use cannot be avoided)
 - 2mg/kg body weight for children up to 40kg

Prescribers are advised to identify and review any patients currently prescribed hydroxyzine to ensure that this treatment continues to be an appropriate option for them.

Following a review associating Hydroxyzine with an increased risk of QT prolongation & Torsade de pointes, prescribing restrictions have been issued.

Prescribers are advised to identify and review any patients who are currently prescribed Hydroxyzine to ensure that this treatment remains appropriate