

40 Medical treatment

A Prescriptions and drugs

As part of treatment, a doctor may **prescribe medication**, commonly referred to as **medicine** or **drugs**. A prescription may take these forms:

Tab. Nabumetone 500 mg
mitte 56
sig. 2 tab. Nocte

Old style

Nabumetone Tab 500 mg
send 56
label 2 tablets at night

New style

In the UK, patients take prescriptions to a **chemist's shop**, which sells a wide range of **non-prescription medicines** and other products such as cosmetics, for **dispensing** by a **pharmacist** (the person who prepares the medicines). In hospitals, prescriptions are dispensed by the **pharmacy** (the department where the drugs are prepared).

Drugs come in many different forms. See Appendix III on page 143 for descriptions and illustrations, and Appendix II on page 131 for a list of abbreviations used in prescriptions.

Note: Latin abbreviations in prescriptions are being replaced by English, but may still be seen.

B The British National Formulary

The British National Formulary provides information on prescribing and administering prescription drugs in the UK.

SULCONAZOLE NITRATE

Indications: Fungal skin infections

Cautions: Contact with eyes and mucous membranes should be avoided.

Side-effects: Occasional local **irritation** and hypersensitivity reactions include mild burning sensation, erythema, and itching. Also **blistering**. Treatment should be discontinued if these are severe.

Dose: Apply 1–2 times daily, continuing for 2–3 weeks after lesions have healed.

Exelderm® (Centrapharm)

Cream, sulconazole nitrate 1%

An indication is a situation or a sign that suggests a specific treatment should be given. A **contraindication** is a situation or sign that a specific drug or treatment should not be used or is **contraindicated**.

Exelderm® is a **proprietary** – commercial – name for a medication containing sulconazole nitrate. The same drug may have both a proprietary name and a **generic** name. For example, Prozac and Fluoxetine are the proprietary and generic names for the same drug.

40.1 Match the abbreviations (1–9) with their meanings (a–i). Look at Appendix II on page 131 to help you.

- 1 p.c.
- 2 q.d.s.
- 3 s.c.
- 4 s.l.
- 5 p.o.
- 6 c.c.
- 7 p.r.n.
- 8 i.v.
- 9 infusⁿ
- a by mouth
- b sublingual
- c with meals
- d as required
- e after food
- f intravenous
- g four times a day
- h infusion
- i subcutaneous

40.2 Complete the sentences. Look at A and B opposite to help you.

- 1 of the skin may be caused by drugs such as aspirin which can produce a rash.
- 2 At a you can get your prescription and all sorts of other health products.
- 3 Gastro-intestinal irritation is a of aspirin.
- 4 Aspirin is for patients with previous or active peptic ulceration.
- 5 When bubbles appear on the skin due to heat or irritation, this is called
- 6 The maximum of paracetamol for an adult is 4 grammes daily.
- 7 means a drug is not contraindicated but care must be taken in its use.
- 8 for codeine phosphate are mild to moderate pain and cough suppression.
- 9 A person who dispenses drugs is a
- 10 The place where drugs are dispensed in a hospital is a

40.3 Describe each of these prescriptions for a patient with suspected acute coronary syndrome. Look at Appendix II on page 131 to help you. The first one has been done for you.

| Medicine | Dose | Method of administration |
|----------------|--------------|--|
| Streptokinase | 1 500 000 U | i.v. infus ⁿ over 60 mins |
| Aspirin | 300 mg | p.o. stat |
| Diamorphine | 2.5–5 mg | i.v. stat |
| Metoclopramide | 10 mg | i.v. stat |
| GTN | 300 mcg/5 ml | i.v. infus ⁿ start @ 40 mcg/min |

Streptokinase, one and a half million units by intravenous infusion over sixty minutes.

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Over to you

Practise writing prescriptions in English for medication you often have to prescribe in your own language.