

MID AND SOUTH ESSEX MEDICINES OPTIMISATION COMMITTEE (MSEMOC)

LUTEIN AND ANTIOXIDANT SUPPLEMENTS

BLACK: NOT RECOMMENDED FOR PRESCRIBING IN PRIMARY, COMMUNITY OR SECONDARY CARE

Mid and South Essex CCGs do not support the prescribing of lutein and antioxidant supplements for the prevention of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) or any other indication. Prescribing of lutein and antioxidant supplements is a low clinical priority due to the lack of robust evidence of clinical effectiveness and ability to obtain sufficient quantities in a healthy balanced diet. This position is supported by NHS England guidance on items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care.

Maintaining a healthy body is a personal responsibility, this includes a balanced diet rich in vitamins and minerals. Lutein and antioxidant supplements contain vitamins A, C and E, minerals such as zinc, and carotenoids such as lutein and zeaxanthin. There is a lack of robust evidence of clinical effectiveness for these supplements and in some people there is a possibility they may cause harm. Experts recommend eating a healthy diet rich in dark green leafy vegetables such as kale and spinach, oily fish and fresh fruit. The [Macular Society](#) provides further information on nutrition and AMD.

Recommendations:

- Recommend that patients take the following measures to reduce the risks of worsening AMD:
 - Eat a healthy diet rich in oily fish, leafy green vegetables and fresh fruit.
 - Maintain a healthy weight and blood pressure.
 - Stop smoking.
 - Protect eyes by wearing lenses that block UV light, or a hat with a brim or visor.
 - Have annual eye checks.
- Do not initiate lutein and antioxidant supplements for any new patient.
- All patients prescribed lutein and antioxidant supplements should have their therapy reviewed, with a view to discontinuing prescribing. Patients should not notice any difference when their prescription is stopped.
- Patients that wish to continue taking lutein and antioxidant supplements should be advised that they can be purchased as self-care over the counter from pharmacies, health food stores and other outlets where they are promoted to assist with "eye health". Many of the preparations have been formulated based on the results of the AREDS and AREDS2 studies, and contain the following:

| Doses recommended as per AREDS and AREDS2 studies (The AREDS formula contains 15mg beta-carotene which is replaced with lutein and zeaxanthin in the AREDS2 formula) | | Dose range in products available for self-purchase | |
|---|---------------|--|--------------|
| Vitamin C | 500mg | Vitamin C | 60mg - 500mg |
| Vitamin E | 270mg (400IU) | Vitamin E | 20mg - 270mg |
| Lutein | 10mg | Lutein | 4mg - 20mg |
| Zeaxanthin | 2mg | Zeaxanthin | 1mg - 2mg |
| Zinc oxide | 25mg - 80mg | Zinc oxide | 15mg - 70mg |
| Copper | 2mg | Copper | 1mg - 2mg |

Providers commissioned to provide services on behalf of Mid and South Essex CCGs are reminded that they are required to follow the local joint formulary and prescribing guidance, as detailed in the medicines management service specification of their contract.

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| References | NHS England and NHS Improvement Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs (Version 2, June 2019): https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/items-which-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-v2.1.pdf PrescQIPP Bulletin 206: Antioxidant vitamins for AMD (November 2017): https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-206-antioxidant-vitamins-for-amd/ |
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