
Position Statement

Prescribing for the Management of Infantile Colic

- Blackpool CCG does not support the prescribing of lactase (Colief®), simethicone (Dentinox Colic Drops® and Infacol®) and gripe water in the management of infantile colic.
- The most useful intervention for infantile colic is support for parents and reassurance that infantile colic will resolve. Other remedies only to be considered if parents feel unable to cope despite advice and reassurance.¹

Introduction

As Blackpool CCG (BCCG) operates within finite budgetary constraints there is a recognised need to prioritise prescribing resources and provide interventions with the greatest proven health gain for the population. Patient self-care for minor ailments is recognised by all parties in the health system to be an important model to promote.

Minor ailments are defined as 'common or self-limiting or uncomplicated conditions which can be diagnosed and managed without medical intervention'.² Accordingly self-care for minor ailments allows patients to manage their condition without the need of a healthcare professional. It is believed that a major proportion of health problems (around 80%) can be managed at home with or without the support of a community pharmacist.

Background

Currently in Blackpool there is approximately one community pharmacy per 3,200 people making access relatively easy. This is a higher concentration of pharmacies than the North West average which is one community pharmacy per 4,000 people. Pharmacy staff are experts in providing advice around minor ailments and are accessible without an appointment. The community pharmacist provides advice on specified minor conditions, including infantile colic, and supply medication, if appropriate. These medicines do not require the patient to be seen by a GP, and are readily available to be purchased over the counter (OTC) from pharmacies, supermarkets and some discount stores.

Lactase (Colief®), simeticone (Dentinox Colic Drops® and Infacol®) and gripe water are preparations that are considered by the NHS to be of low priority, poor value for money and limited clinical value and should be purchased over the counter. These medicines should be considered for self-care with the support of the community pharmacist.

Colief® is classified by the NHS as a 'borderline substance'.³ It is a dietary supplement (i.e. not a licensed medicine) containing the enzyme lactase, which is added to breast milk or infant formula to reduce its lactose content. Lactase use is based on the theory that some infants develop an intolerance to lactose, usually temporarily, due to a transient deficiency in lactase. Cow's milk protein allergy is a distinct condition to lactose intolerance and is managed differently. The evidence is limited that adding lactase to breast milk or infant formula to lower the lactose content may be of benefit.

Simeticone (activated dimeticone) is an antifoaming agent. Evidence of benefit is uncertain. Its use in colic is based on the theory that symptoms are caused by gas in the intestine; the antifoaming action is intended to cause gas bubbles to coalesce to make them easier to eliminate. Studies of simeticone have not demonstrated benefit in infantile colic.

Gripe water is a traditional remedy includes sodium bicarbonate with or without essential oils such as dill or fennel. Gripe water has traditionally been used for colic, although it is not licensed for this indication. There is no clinical data to support using it for infantile colic.

Recommendations

- The most useful intervention for infantile colic is support for parents and reassurance that infantile colic will resolve
- DO NOT prescribe Colief®, Dentinox Colic Drops® or Infacol® due to the limited evidence of their effectiveness
- Parents should be advised to buy these products over the counter from pharmacies if they want to try it but should be made aware that the evidence supporting is limited. OTC treatment with lactase or simethicone should be stopped if there is no response after one week.

Medicines Optimisation, Blackpool CCG
August, 2016

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References

1. Colic – Infantile, Clinical Knowledge Summary, last revised August 2012. Accessed via www.cks.nice.org.uk
2. <http://www.selfcareforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Self-Care-An-Ethical-Imperative.pdf>
3. Paediatric Formulary Committee. BNF for Children (online) London: BMJ Group, Pharmaceutical Press, and RCPCH Publications, accessed via www.medicinescomplete.com