

Policy Statement; Prescribing of Vitamin B compound or vitamin B compound strong tablets is **not supported**

Mid-Essex Clinical Commissioning Group does not support the prescribing of vitamin B compound or vitamin B compound strong tablets (except for patients with re-feeding syndrome or other complex malnutrition needs, as guided by a specialist involved in their care)

Vitamin B compound tablets (including compound strong) have historically been used as a thiamine supplement in people who are alcohol-dependent to prevent Wernicke's encephalopathy.

Thiamine supplementation is important in this at risk group; however, NICE (CG 100) makes NO reference to the use of these preparations, due to a lack of evidence. **Neither vitamin B compound NOR vitamin B compound strong tablets contains enough thiamine for treatment/prophylaxis of Wernicke's encephalopathy.**

Oral absorption of thiamine is rate limited in healthy adults and further reduced in those with alcohol dependence. Only 1mg will be absorbed from a single 30mg tablet in a malnourished patient.

Since only a small proportion of the dose is likely to be absorbed, it is advised to provide oral thiamine supplements three times daily, maximising the opportunity to achieve sufficient amounts.

Therefore the recommended thiamine supplementation to prevent Wernicke's encephalopathy in people with alcohol dependence is:

Thiamine 50-100mg three times daily

For those who complete alcohol withdrawal and remain **abstinent**, after 6 weeks, the TDS dose may be reduced to **50mg OD** and continued for as long as malnutrition may be present.

Vitamin B compound & vitamin B compound strong tablets are licensed for the treatment of clinical and sub-clinical vitamin B deficiency states. With the exception of thiamine and vitamin B12 (for which a separate local guideline exists), deficiency of B vitamins is rare in the UK, and as malnutrition is often implicated, oral supplementation is of questionable clinical benefit and these should not be prescribed on the NHS. Vitamin B compound tablets are widely available to purchase for people who wish to use these as a dietary supplement.

Recommendations:

- **Do not initiate** vitamin B compound or compound strong tablets except on the advice of a specialist for people with re-feeding syndrome or other complex malnutrition needs
- **Stop vitamin B compound and compound strong tablets in all people with alcohol dependence, ensure they are prescribed 50-100mg thiamine THREE times daily**
- In previously alcohol dependent people who remain abstinent, the thiamine dose may be reduced to once daily and stopped altogether if malnutrition is no longer a concern
- Vitamin B compound and compound strong tablets are of questionable clinical benefit and should not be prescribed
- These products are widely available to purchase for people who wish to use as a dietary supplement

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