

Hertfordshire and West Essex Adult Palliative Care Formulary

This formulary has been developed by stakeholders across Hertfordshire and West Essex (HWE) to provide benefits for patients and the local healthcare system as described in NICE Medicines practice guideline MPG1; improving patient care by optimising the use of medicines, supporting the inclusion of patient factors in decisions about medicines, improving quality by reducing inappropriate variations in clinical care, improving quality through access to cost-effective medicines, supporting the supply of medicines across a local health economy, supporting prescribers to follow guidance published by professional regulatory bodies. Healthcare and other professionals are expected to take clinical guidelines and formulary choices fully into account when exercising their clinical judgement. However, this does not override the responsibility of healthcare professionals and others to make decisions appropriate to the circumstances of each patient, in consultation with the patient and/or their guardian or carer.

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ MPG1/resources/developing-and-updating-local-formularies-pdf-1779400261573>

Summaries of product characteristics (SPCs), British National Formulary (BNF) or the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) or NICE websites should be accessed for up-to-date information on any medicine.

Medicine	Formulation	Indication	HWE Palliative Care formulary comments	HWE RAG rating	Reference for evidence base
Pain					
Buprenorphine	Patches	Pain	For recommended brand see place decision	Green	2,3a,4,5
Co-codamol 30/500	Oral	Pain		Green	1,4
Codeine phosphate	Oral	Pain	Also see cough and diarrhoea	Green	1,2,4,5
Fentanyl	Patches	Pain	For recommended brand see place decision	Green	1,2,3a,4,5
Fentanyl	Sublingual tablet	Pain	<u>New patients: prescribing initiated by palliative care specialist as a 3rd line breakthrough pain option when morphine and oxycodone are either contraindicated or inappropriate.</u> <u>Existing patients: review all patients and de-prescribe fentanyl IR where appropriate in liaison with palliative care team</u>	Amber Initiation	1,2,3a,4,5
Fentanyl	Buccal tablet	Pain	<u>Existing patients:</u>	Double red	1,2,3a,4,5
Fentanyl	Lozenge	Pain	<u>review all patients and de-prescribe fentanyl IR where appropriate in liaison with palliative care team</u>		1,2,3a,4,5
Fentanyl	Spray	Pain			1,2,3a,4,5
Morphine sulphate	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Pain	Also see cough, breathlessness and diarrhoea	Green	1,2,3a,4,5
Oxycodone	Oral	Pain	Used 2nd line if morphine not tolerated. Usually prescribed in primary care following specialist advice For recommended brand see place decision	Green	1,2,3a,4,5
Oxycodone	Subcutaneous injection	Pain	Used 2nd line if morphine not tolerated. Usually prescribed in primary care following specialist advice For recommended brand see place decision	Green	

Medicine	Formulation	Indication	HWE Palliative Care formulary comments	HWE RAG rating	Reference for evidence base
Paracetamol	Oral Suppositories	Pain	Consider the risk of liver toxicity when patients weight is less than 50kg (HSIB)	Green	1,2,3c,4,5
Tramadol	Oral	Pain	Marol preferred brand for MR	Green	1,2,4,5
Alfentanil	Injection	Severe pain	Specialist prescribing only for patients with stage 4 and 5 chronic kidney disease and 3rd line - where other opioids have been ineffective.	Red - Palliative care specialist only	1,2,4
Ketamine	Injection	Severe pain	Prescribed by specialists for treating neuropathic, inflammatory or ischaemic pain, it may be useful for treating terminal uncontrolled overwhelming pain. Prescribed by the palliative care team as an analgesic in patients for whom multiple other Step 3 analgesics (on the World Health Organisation (WHO) analgesic ladder) have failed or are contraindicated. The use of ketamine in palliative care for analgesia is an unlicensed use and lies outside its UK marketing authorisation. MHRA December 2013: Ketamine, a review of use and harm	Red - Palliative care specialist only	1,2,4,5
Methadone	Oral Injection	Severe pain	Prescribed by specialists for exceptional complex patients unresponsive to other opioids. Can be used in syringe pump but requires specialist monitoring.	Red - Palliative care specialist only	1,2,4,5
Amitriptyline	Oral	Neuropathic pain		Green	1,2,3b,4,5
Duloxetine	Oral	Neuropathic pain		Green	1,2,3b,4
Gabapentin	Oral	Neuropathic pain	Also see seizures	Green	1,2,3b,4,5
Nortriptyline	Oral	Neuropathic pain		Green	
Pregabalin	Oral	Neuropathic pain	Also see seizures	Green	1,2,3b,4,5
Ibuprofen	Oral	Anti-inflammatory		Green	1,2,3c,4,5
Naproxen	Oral	Anti-inflammatory		Green	1,2,4,5
Baclofen	Oral	Spasticity		Green	1,2,4,5
Diazepam	Oral	Spasm	Also see anxiety, breathlessness and insomnia	Green	1,2,4,5
Respiratory					
Codeine phosphate	Oral	Cough	Also see pain and diarrhoea	Green	1,2,3c
Morphine sulphate	Oral	Cough	Also see pain, breathlessness and diarrhoea	Green	1,2,3c,4,5
Diazepam	Oral	Anxiety and breathlessness	Also see insomnia, spasm	Green	1,2,3c,4,5

Medicine	Formulation	Indication	HWE Palliative Care formulary comments	HWE RAG rating	Reference for evidence base
Lorazepam	Oral	Breathlessness	Also see nausea and vomiting, acute psychotic agitation, anxiety and delirium. Oral use Genus® brand only	Green	1,2,3c,4
Midazolam	Subcutaneous injection	Anxiety and breathlessness		Green	1,2,3c,4
Morphine sulphate	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Breathlessness	Also see pain, cough and diarrhoea	Green	1,2,3c,4,5
Furosemide	Subcutaneous injection	Pulmonary oedema	Prescribe within locally agreed heart failure pathway where available	Red unless prescribed within locally agreed heart failure pathway where available	2
Glycopyrronium bromide	Subcutaneous injection	Respiratory secretions	Also see bowel colic	Green	1,2,3d,5
Hyoscine butyl bromide	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Respiratory secretions	Also see bowel colic	Green	1,2,3d,4,5
Hyoscine hydrobromide	Transdermal	Respiratory secretions		Green	1,2,3d,5
Neurological					
Clonazepam	Oral	Seizures		Amber Initiation	1,2,3e,4
Gabapentin	Oral	Seizures	Also see neuropathic pain	Amber Initiation	1,2,3e
Levetiracetam	Oral	Seizures		Amber Initiation	1,2,3e,4
Levetiracetam	Injection	Seizures	Treatment of epileptic seizures and status epilepticus in palliative and end of life care for patients who are unable to take their medications orally and when IV access is not possible or not desired. Off-label use of subcutaneous levetiracetam offers the possibility of maintaining seizure control when the oral route is lost and there is no IV access, without increasing the level of sedation.	Amber Initiation	1,2,3e,4,5
Midazolam	Buccal	Seizures	Also see delirium, anxiety, restlessness/agitation and breathlessness	Green	1,2,3e,4
Midazolam	Subcutaneous injection	Seizures	Also see delirium, anxiety, restlessness/agitation and breathlessness	Green	1,2,4,5

Medicine	Formulation	Indication	HWE Palliative Care formulary comments	HWE RAG rating	Reference for evidence base
Phenobarbital	Injection	Seizures		Red - Palliative care specialist only	1,2,3e,4,5
Pregabalin	Oral	Seizures	Also see neuropathic pain	Amber Initiation	1,2,3e
Zolpidem	Oral	Insomnia		Green	2,3f
Zopiclone	Oral	Insomnia		Green	1,2,3f
Diazepam	Oral	Insomnia	Also see anxiety, breathlessness, spasm	Green	2,5
Haloperidol	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Psychosis	Also see nausea and vomiting, restlessness/agitation and delirium	Green	1,2,3c4
Levomepromazine	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Psychosis	Also see nausea and vomiting and terminal agitation	Green	1,2,3c4
Lorazepam	Oral	Acute psychotic agitation	Also see nausea and vomiting, anxiety, delirium and breathlessness Oral use Genus® brand only	Green	1,2,3c4
Haloperidol	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Restlessness / agitation	Also see nausea and vomiting, psychosis and delirium	Green	1,2,3c,3d,4,5
Haloperidol	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Delirium	Also see nausea and vomiting, psychosis and restlessness/agitation	Green	1,2,3c,3d,4
Levomepromazine	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Terminal agitation	Also see psychosis and nausea and vomiting	Green	1,2,3c,4,5
Lorazepam	Oral	Delirium	Also see nausea and vomiting and acute psychotic agitation, anxiety and breathlessness Oral use Genus® brand only	Green	1,2,3c,4
Midazolam	Subcut injection	Delirium	Also see seizures, anxiety, restlessness / agitation and breathlessness	Green	1,2,3c,4
Haloperidol	Oral Subcut injection	Anxiety	Also see nausea and vomiting, psychosis, delirium and restlessness/agitation	Green	2,3c,3d,4
Lorazepam	Oral	Anxiety	Also see nausea and vomiting, acute psychotic agitation, breathlessness and delirium Oral use Genus® brand only	Green	1,2,3c,3d,4
Midazolam	Subcutaneous injection	Anxiety	Also see seizures, delirium, restlessness/agitation and breathlessness	Green	1,2,3c,3d,4,5
Midazolam	Subcutaneous injection	Restlessness / agitation	Also see seizures, anxiety, delirium and breathlessness	Green	1,2,3c,3d,4,5

Medicine	Formulation	Indication	HWE Palliative Care formulary comments	HWE RAG rating	Reference for evidence base
Gastrointestinal					
Cyclizine	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Nausea and vomiting		Green	1,2,3a,3c,4,5
Domperidone	Oral	Nausea and vomiting		Green	1,2,4
Haloperidol	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Nausea and vomiting	Also see psychosis, restlessness/agitation and delirium	Green	1,2,4,5
Levomepromazine	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Nausea and vomiting	Also see psychosis and terminal agitation	Green	1,2,4,5
Lorazepam	Oral	Nausea and vomiting	Also see acute psychotic agitation, delirium, anxiety and breathlessness Oral use Genus® brand only	Green	1,2,4
Metoclopramide	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Nausea and vomiting	Also see bowel obstruction dyspepsia and reflux hiccups	Green	1,2,4,5
Ondansetron	Oral Suppositories Subcutaneous injection	Nausea and vomiting		Amber Initiation	1,2,4,5
Arachis oil enema	Enema	Constipation	Very hard loading: arachis oil enema (except in those with nut allergy) overnight, followed by phosphate enema (1,4). Arachis oil enema is higher cost than phosphate and sodium citrate enemas. Prescriber should check allergies prior to prescribing	Green	1,2,3a,3c,4
Bisacodyl	Oral Suppository	Constipation	Soft loading: bisacodyl suppository, sodium citrate or phosphate enema (4)	Green	1,2,3a,3c,4
Docusate sodium	Oral	Constipation		Green	1,2,3a,3c,4
Glycerine suppositories	Suppositories	Constipation	Hard loading: glycerol suppository as lubricant or stimulant; then bisacodyl suppository, sodium citrate or phosphate enema (1,4)	Green	1,2,3a,3c,4
Macrogols	Oral	Constipation		Green	1,2,3a,3c,5
Phosphate enema	Enema	Constipation	Soft loading: bisacodyl suppository, sodium citrate or phosphate enema (1,4). Phosphate enema is higher cost than sodium citrate enema	Green	1,2,3a,3c,4
Senna	Oral	Constipation		Green	1,2,3a,3c,4,5

Medicine	Formulation	Indication	HWE Palliative Care formulary comments	HWE RAG rating	Reference for evidence base
Sodium citrate	Enema	Constipation	Soft loading: bisacodyl suppository, sodium citrate or phosphate enema.	Green	1,2,3c,4
Sodium picosulfate	Oral	Constipation		Green	1,2,3c
Codeine phosphate	Oral	Diarrhoea	Also see pain and cough	Green	1,2,4
Loperamide	Oral	Diarrhoea		Green	1,2,4,5
Lansoprazole	Capsules Fast tabs	Dyspepsia		Green	1,2,4
Omeprazole	Capsules	Dyspepsia		Green	1,2,4
Metoclopramide	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Dyspepsia	Also see nausea and vomiting, bowel obstruction and reflux hiccups	Green	1,2,4
Pancreatin	Oral	Treatment steatorrhoea due to malabsorption from pancreatic insufficiency.	GPs would usually seek advice and guidance prior to initiating this medicine for this indication	Green	1,2,4
Metoclopramide	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Reflux Hiccups	Also see nausea and vomiting, bowel obstruction and dyspepsia	Green	1,2,4,5
Metoclopramide	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Bowel obstruction	Also see nausea and vomiting, dyspepsia and reflux hiccups	Green	1,2,4,5
Mebeverine	Oral	Antispasmodic		Green	2
Glycopyrronium bromide	Subcutaneous injection	Bowel colic	Also see respiratory secretions	Green	1,2,5
Hyoscine butyl bromide	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Bowel colic	Also see respiratory secretions	Green	1,2,4,5
Octreotide	Injection	Gastric secretions from GI tumours and bowel obstruction	Specialist prescribing only for patients when other treatments (e.g. hyoscine butylbromide) have failed or are contraindicated. Once improvement in the symptom is achieved, reduction to the lowest dose that maintains symptom control is recommended.	Red - Palliative care specialist only	1,2,3d,4,5

Medicine	Formulation	Indication	HWE Palliative Care formulary comments	HWE RAG rating	Reference for evidence base															
Musculoskeletal																				
Denosumab Xgeva®	Injection	Skeletal-related events	Denosumab Xgeva®for prevention of skeletal related events in adults with bone metastases from solid tumours, in line with NICE TA265	Red secondary care prescribing only	2															
Ibandronic acid	Oral	Skeletal-related events and hypercalcaemia		Amber Initiation	1,2,4,5															
Disodium pamidronate	Injection	Skeletal-related events and hypercalcaemia		Red	1,2,4,5															
Zoledronic acid	Injection	Skeletal-related events and hypercalcaemia		Red	1,2,4,5															
Skin																				
Cetirizine	Oral	Pruritis		Green	1															
Chlorphenamine	Oral	Pruritis		Green	1,2,4															
Paroxetine	Oral	Intractable pruritus	Unlicensed indication with limited evidence base. Specialist initiated when other medicines had been ineffective and benefits established prior to transfer of prescribing to GP	Amber Initiation	1,2,4															
Other																				
Dexamethasone	Oral Subcutaneous injection	Raised intracranial pressure due to cerebral oedema. Spinal cord compression. Superior vena cava obstruction. Appetite and fatigue. Nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy or intracranial disease	Converting between oral and subcutaneous (SC) dexamethasone (3.3mg/ml) 4mg of oral dexamethasone is approximately equivalent to 3.3mg of SC dexamethasone. <table><thead><tr><th>Oral dose of dexamethasone</th><th>Prescribed dose of dexamethasone by SC injection</th><th>Volume of dexamethasone injection (3.3mg/ml)</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>8mg</td><td>6.6mg</td><td>2ml</td></tr><tr><td>6mg</td><td>4.95mg</td><td>1.5ml</td></tr><tr><td>4mg</td><td>3.3mg</td><td>1ml</td></tr><tr><td>2mg</td><td>1.65mg</td><td>0.5ml</td></tr></tbody></table>	Oral dose of dexamethasone	Prescribed dose of dexamethasone by SC injection	Volume of dexamethasone injection (3.3mg/ml)	8mg	6.6mg	2ml	6mg	4.95mg	1.5ml	4mg	3.3mg	1ml	2mg	1.65mg	0.5ml	Green	1,2,4,5
Oral dose of dexamethasone	Prescribed dose of dexamethasone by SC injection	Volume of dexamethasone injection (3.3mg/ml)																		
8mg	6.6mg	2ml																		
6mg	4.95mg	1.5ml																		
4mg	3.3mg	1ml																		
2mg	1.65mg	0.5ml																		
Tranexamic acid	Oral	Short-term use for haemorrhage		Green	1,2,4,5															
Tranexamic acid	Injection	Short-term use for haemorrhage	Specialist prescribing for patients topically for surface bleeding, as a mouthwash (made using the injection), intravenous and subcutaneous via syringe pump.	Red - Palliative care specialist only	1,2,4,5															

References

1. Palliative Care Adult Network Guidelines <https://www.pallcare.info/books/book-main>
2. Palliative Care Formulary <https://www.medicinescomplete.com/>
3. NICE Guidelines
 - 3a. NICE CG 140 [Palliative care for adults: strong opioids for pain relief](#)
 - 3b. NICE CG 173 [Neuropathic pain in adults: pharmacological management in nonspecialist settings](#)
 - 3c. NICE NG 191 [COVID-19 rapid guideline: managing COVID-19](#)
 - 3d. NICE NG 31 [Care of dying adults in the last days of life](#)
 - 3e. NICE NG 217 [Epilepsies in children, young people and adults](#)
 - 3f. NICE TA 77 [Guidance on the use of zaleplon, zolpidem and zopiclone for the short-term management of insomnia](#)
 - 3g. NICE TA 265 [Denosumab for the prevention of skeletal-related events in adults with bone metastases from solid tumours](#)
 - 3h. NICE NG 131 [Prostate cancer: diagnosis and management](#)
4. Scottish Palliative Care Guidelines <https://rightdecisions.scot.nhs.uk/scottish-palliative-care-guidelines/?UNLID=5542626920231212142053>
5. BNF (Prescribing in Palliative Care) <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/medicines-guidance/prescribing-in-palliative-care/>

DOUBLE RED STATUS - NOT RECOMMENDED FOR PRESCRIBING

RED – RECOMMENDED FOR RESTRICTED PRESCRIBING BY SPECIALIST ONLY. NOT RECOMMENDED FOR PRIMARY CARE PRESCRIBING

AMBER INITIATION – INITIATED BY SPECIALISTS IN SECONDARY AND TERTIARY CARE WITH PRESCRIBING (AND MONITORING, WHERE APPLICABLE) CONTINUED BY PRIMARY

AMBER PROTOCOL - INITIATED BY SPECIALISTS WITH PRESCRIBING CONTINUED BY PRIMARY CARE UNDER A SHARED CARE PROTOCOL

GREEN- RECOMMENDED FOR PRESCRIBING IN PRIMARY CARE

Version	3
Approved by	Hertfordshire and West Essex Area Prescribing Committee
Date approved / updated	V1 approved 01/12/2022. Updated to v2 February 2024. Updated to v3 February 2026.
Developed by	Pharmacy and Medicines Optimisation Team Hertfordshire and West Essex (HWE) ICB with relevant HWE ICS stakeholders.
Review Date	This HWE APC recommendation is based upon the evidence available at the time of publication. This recommendation will be reviewed upon request in the light of new evidence becoming available
Superseded version	West Essex CCG Palliative care formulary