

July 2008

Dear Healthcare Professional,

From the 1st October 2008, Avonex Prefilled syringes will be available in a new 12-week pack in addition to the current 4-week pack presentation in the UK – offering your patients the convenience of fewer home deliveries.

No changes have been made to the Avonex Prefilled syringe. It's still the same once-weekly treatment for MS shown to have:

- significant beneficial effects on cognitive dysfunction¹
- a reduction in disability over the long term²

We've simply added the option to prescribe a 12-week pack. The current 4-week pack will be available as usual.

The new 12-week pack means fewer deliveries for your patients to manage, not to mention less space in the refrigerator for some of your patients to accommodate. It's not surprising then that 60% of Avonex patients surveyed said that they would choose the 12-week pack if given the option.³

To prescribe the new 12-week pack for your patients from the 1st October, we suggest the following wording:

*Avonex 30 micrograms IM once weekly
Please supply 12-week pack of Prefilled syringes*

For more information, please feel free to contact me or ask your Avonex Area Business Manager for more details.

Kind regards,



Martin Mc Laughlin
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Prescribing information: AVONEX® (interferon beta-1a)

Please refer to the Summary of Product Characteristics for further information. **Indication:** For the treatment of patients with relapsing multiple sclerosis or patients who have experienced a single demyelinating event with an active inflammatory process who are determined to be at high risk of developing clinically definite multiple sclerosis. **Dosage and Administration:** 30 µg injected IM once a week.

Contraindications: Initiation of treatment in pregnancy. Patients with a history of hypersensitivity to any of the constituents. Patients with severe depression and/or suicidal ideation; **Warnings & Precautions:** Use with caution in patients with previous or current depressive disorders - depression and suicidal ideation are known to occur in increased frequency in the multiple sclerosis population in association with interferon use. Administer with caution to patients with a history of seizures, or receiving treatment with anti-epileptics, particularly if their epilepsy is not adequately controlled with anti-epileptics. Used with caution & monitor closely in patients with cardiac disease, severe renal or hepatic failure or severe myelosuppression. Routine periodic blood chemistry and haematology tests are recommended during treatment. Development of neutralizing antibodies to AVONEX may decrease efficacy. **Pregnancy & lactation:** Initiation of treatment is contraindicated during pregnancy. Women of child bearing potential should take appropriate contraceptive measures. If the patient becomes pregnant or plans to become pregnant, or breast feeding while taking AVONEX, discontinuation of therapy should be considered. **Drug interactions:** No formal interaction studies have been conducted with AVONEX in humans. Corticosteroids or ACTH can be given during relapses. Caution should be exercised in combining AVONEX with products with a narrow therapeutic index and dependent on cytochrome P450 for clearance. **Side Effects:** The most commonly reported symptoms are of the flu-like symptoms: myalgia, fever, chills, asthenia, headache and nausea. Other common

events include: Investigations decreased; lymphocyte count, white blood cell count, neutrophil count, haematocrit and increased blood potassium and blood urea nitrogen. Nervous system disorders: muscle spasticity, hypoesthesia. Respiratory, thoracic and mediastinal disorders: rhinorrhoea. Gastrointestinal disorders: vomiting, diarrhoea, nausea. Skin and subcutaneous tissue disorders: rash, increased sweating, contusion. Musculoskeletal and connective tissue disorders: muscle cramp, neck pain, myalgia, arthralgia, pain in extremity, back pain, muscle stiffness, musculoskeletal stiffness. Metabolism and nutrition disorders: anorexia. Vascular disorders: flushing. General disorders and administration site conditions: flu-like symptoms, pyrexia, chills, sweating, injections site pain, injection site erythema, injection site bruising, asthenia, pain, fatigue, malaise, night sweats. Psychiatric disorders: depression, insomnia. **Legal Classification:** POM. **Pack Size and UK NHS Price:** Box containing four injections £654. Reimbursed through High Tech Scheme in Ireland. **Package Quantities:** Lyophilised Powder: 1 box containing four trays. Each tray contains a 3 ml glass vial with BIO-SET device containing a 30 µg dose of Interferon beta-1a per vial, a 1 ml pre-filled glass syringe of solvent and one needle. Pre-filled Syringe: 1 box containing four trays. Each tray contains a 1 ml pre-filled syringe made of glass containing 0.5 ml of solution (30 µg dose of Interferon beta-1a) and one needle. Product Licence Numbers: EU/1/97/033/002-004. **Product Licence Holder:** Biogen Idec UK Ltd., Innovation House, 70 Norden Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 4AY, United Kingdom. **Date of last revision of Prescribing Information:** May 2008.

Adverse events should be reported. Reporting forms and information can be found at www.yellowcard.gov.uk. Adverse events should also be reported to Biogen Idec Ltd., on 0800 028 6639

Date of preparation: June 2008

AV00-GBR-23525

References:

1. Halper J *et al.* J Neurosci Nurs 2003; **35**: 70-81.
2. Rudick RA *et al.* Poster presented at ECTRIMS. October 2007; Prague, Czech Republic.
3. Strata Healthcare Market Research. 2nd April 2008.