

Generic abiraterone

You will notice that there has been a change in the brand of abiraterone (hormone therapy drug) that you receive for prostate cancer. This leaflet will answer any questions you may have about this change.

What's happening with abiraterone for prostate cancer?

In October 2022, the patent protection on the original brand of abiraterone (Zytiga®) for prostate cancer came to an end. When a patent for a drug runs out, other pharmaceutical companies can make their own copy of the drug – these are referred to as 'generic' medicines. There is now a version of generic abiraterone available in the UK that is licensed for prostate cancer. To ensure we use NHS resources efficiently, we will be switching patients who are currently receiving Zytiga® to the generic version of the medicine. The NHS always tries to use generic drugs and this is normal for many health conditions.

What is a generic medicine?

A generic medicine is identical to a brand name drug. Although generic drugs are chemically identical to their branded counterparts, they typically cost much less than the branded price. Use of generic medicines – for example, antibiotics, painkillers, heart medicines and cancer medicines is very common in the NHS. Using generic medications allows the NHS to make considerable savings, which can be used to improve healthcare for all of us.

How can I be sure of the quality of generic abiraterone?

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA – <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/medicines-and-healthcare-products-regulatory-agency>) is the authority that regulates the use of medicines across the UK. Health professionals and patients can be assured that MHRA-approved generic medicines have met the same standards as the original drug. To gain MHRA approval, a generic medicine must:

- Contain the same active ingredients as the original drug (inactive ingredients may vary);
- Be identical in strength, dosage form, and route of administration;
- Meet the same batch requirements for identity, strength, purity, and quality; and
- Be manufactured under the same strict standards of good manufacturing practice regulations required for the original product.

What does this mean to me?

The generic medicine we are switching you to will contain the same active product – abiraterone. You will continue getting the same amount of abiraterone at the same intervals. The treatment for your condition remains unchanged; **we will monitor your disease activity as normal and there is no need for additional monitoring.**

What if I experience problems after switching to generic abiraterone?

We do not expect any patients to experience any problems as a result of switching. However, if after the switch you do experience problems, then you can discuss this with your oncology specialist nurse or specialist doctor. Occasionally, some patients may experience some minor side effects when they take a new formulation of a drug. If these are problematic, then you should discuss this with the specialist team looking after you.

I'm already on Zytiga® (the Janssen-Cilag brand of abiraterone); will I be switched to generic abiraterone?

Yes, the whole of the NHS will switch over to generic abiraterone. Although the timelines between different hospitals may vary, the plan across the NHS is to switch all patients on Zytiga® to generic abiraterone. You may notice that the tablets you receive come in different packaging. The colour, shape and markings on the tablets may also be different. Always read the directions on your medicines carefully so that you know how many tablets you should take. Take generic abiraterone acetate in the same way as your Zytiga abiraterone acetate – at least 1 hour *before* or at least 2 hours *after* food. **Do not take the tablets with food.** Swallow the tablets whole with water. Store generic abiraterone acetate tablets in the same way as your Zytiga® tablets; there are no special storage requirements.

What should I do if I want more information or I have concerns?

If you have any further concerns, please contact your oncologist, oncology pharmacist or specialist nurse.

Summary

- Generic versions of many drugs are used routinely in the NHS without problems.
- All generic brands of abiraterone in the UK have been carefully reviewed and approved by the MHRA for their quality and safety.
- You can be assured that all of the available generic brands of abiraterone will be just as good as Zytiga®.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, or need further information on your medication, contact:

- Your oncology team via hospital switchboard on 0118 322 5111, **OR**
- The Medicines Information Patient Helpline on 0118 322 7642 (Mon-Fri 1pm-4pm) or email medicines.information@royalberkshire.nhs.uk, and a member of the oncology pharmacy team will be in contact with you.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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