IMPORTANT DRUG SAFETY INFORMATION

Bern, 05 May 2023

**Propylene glycol – restriction on use for Becetamol drops**

In view of the health risks associated with high propylene glycol concentrations, Swissmedic declares that the product Becetamol Drops may no longer be used in children under 5 years.

**Summary:**

- The propylene glycol concentration following the administration of Becetamol Drops at the recommended dosage exceeds the defined thresholds for propylene glycol in neonates and children under 5 years.
- Becetamol Drops may no longer be administered to neonates or children under 5 years.

The latest revision of therapeutic products legislation in January 2019 included the introduction of new compulsory declarations for excipients, specifically their full qualitative declaration, as well as new thresholds for certain excipients (Annex 3a of the Therapeutic Products Licensing Requirements Ordinance, TPLRO). The new requirements must be implemented by authorisation holders in connection with an extension of authorisation within the next 5 years, i.e. by the end of 2023 at the latest, otherwise modified texts of the product information will need to be submitted to Swissmedic.

Because of its potential toxicity, and as an excipient of particular interest, propylene glycol must now be declared, in terms of both quality and quantity, if defined thresholds are exceeded in neonates and small children. The product information texts must also refer to the toxicity of the excipient.
The potential toxicity of propylene glycol is rated higher for children, particularly for neonates, since the lower levels of alcohol dehydrogenase and aldehyde dehydrogenase in children under 5 years mean that its repeated administration, or its administration in combination with another substrate of alcohol dehydrogenase such as ethanol, can lead to accumulation of the propylene glycol, possibly accompanied by serious side effects.

Becetamol Drops (auth. no. 51390) have been authorised since 1991. The propylene glycol concentration following the administration of Becetamol Drops at the recommended daily dosage exceeds many times over the thresholds that are accepted as safe in neonates and small children.

The authorisation holder has therefore decided not to apply for the continued authorisation of Becetamol Drops (EXP of last batch: 11/2023, authorisation discontinued on 4.01.2024). As of February 2023, the medicinal product has no longer been available on the wholesale market.

Although Becetamol has been authorised and used since 1991, Swissmedic has not identified any corresponding safety signals for Becetamol, either in the national database or the global WHO Vigilance database. Nor did investigations conducted at Tox Info Suisse produce any safety signals.
Nevertheless, since the threshold for propylene glycol may be exceeded, as a precautionary measure Swissmedic recommends stopping the administration of Becetamol Drops to neonates and children under 5 years.
The updated medicinal product information (Information for healthcare professionals and Patient information) will be published on www.swissmedicinfo.ch.

Currently, 379 systemic human medicinal products containing propylene glycol as an excipient are authorised, including 23 with dosage recommendations for neonates and children under 5 years. The work on the implementation of full declaration and the evaluation of the risk potential of these medicinal products is still ongoing. If any need for action is identified for other medicines, Swissmedic will take the measures needed to maintain drug safety and issue corresponding information.

**Reporting adverse drug reactions**

For reporting adverse drug reactions (ADRs), Swissmedic recommends the use of the reporting portal developed for this purpose, namely the Electronic Vigilance System (EIViS). All the necessary information can be found at www.swissmedic.ch.