

Prescribing tip for actioning by practice

Asacol supply issues

Since early October 2021 Asacol® 800mg MR gastro resistant tablets have been out of stock and the remaining stock of 400mg cannot fully support ongoing demand for the 800mg tablets.

In total there are 12 mesalazine tablet preparations licensed for use in the UK

- Asacol® MR 400mg and 800mg tablets
- Octasa® MR 400mg, 800mg and 1,600mg tablets
- Mezavant® XL 1,200mg tablets
- Pentasa® SR 500mg and 1,000mg tablets
- Salofalk® 250mg, 500mg and 1,000mg tablets
- Zintasa® 400mg tablets

The [British National Formulary monograph for mesalazine](#) states that there is no evidence to show one mesalazine preparation is more effective than another although the delivery characteristics of oral mesalazine preparations may vary. The [NICE guidelines for ulcerative colitis](#) and [British Society of Gastroenterology guidelines for inflammatory bowel disease](#) do not recommend one mesalazine tablet preparation over another.

Octasa® MR is a branded generic version of Asacol® MR. Although no direct studies between the two have been published, Octasa®MR has shown bioequivalence to Asacol®MR⁽¹⁾. Octasa®MR 400mg and 800mg tablets remain available and can support demand for the Asacol® 800mg strength tablets.

The [joint CCG/LTHtr prescribing formulary](#) recommends that patients should be prescribed mesalazine by brand name and maintained on that brand once stabilised. It includes Octasa as a first line [cost effective](#) choice.

For patients with insufficient supplies of Asacol, clinicians may wish to consider the following ⁽²⁾

- Prescribing Octasa®800mg M/R tablets and reassuring patients that this is a similar preparation to Asacol® 800mg M/R gastro-resistant tablets.
- Referring to the [SPS Q&A document](#) for further information on licensed indications and dosing of other brands of mesalazine, if there are difficulties sourcing Octasa® MR tablets or Asacol®400mg MR tablets, or they are not considered appropriate.
- Whether a patient has had any previous negative experiences with the proposed preparation e.g. documented adverse effects or loss of symptom control if previously switched.
- Monitoring patients for disease control and tolerability of treatment after switching product and ensuring they are maintained on this brand if the switch is successful.
- Only continuing to prescribe two Asacol®400mg MR gastro-resistant tablets if Octasa®800mg MR tablets are not considered suitable and after ensuring patients have been appropriately counselled on the number of tablets to take.
- Deferring initiating any new patients on Asacol®800mg M/R tablets until the supply issue is resolved

References

- 1 [Differences in oral tablet mesalazine preparations and considerations when switching – SPS - Specialist Pharmacy Service – The first stop for professional medicines advice](#)
- 2 [MSN_2021_049-Asacol-Mesalazine-800mg-MR-tablets.pdf \(psnc.org.uk\)](#)

To contact the Medicines Optimisation Team please phone 01772 214302

If you have any suggestions for future topics to cover in our prescribing tips please contact Nicola.schaffel@nhs.net