

Public Health Link

From the Chief Medical Officer for Wales

Distribution:	As Appendix 1
From:	Dr Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer/ Medical Director NHS Wales
Date:	2 April 2020
Reference:	CEM/CMO/2020/11
Category:	Class 1 (action within 24 hours)
Title:	Influenza Season 2019-20 – Cessation of use of antivirals now recommended.
What is this about:	This letter advises that GPs should no longer prescribe antiviral medicines empirically for the treatment of influenza-like illness.
Why has it been sent:	For action, information and to pass on to colleagues.

Dear Colleague

The most recent surveillance data from Public Health Wales indicate that the circulation of influenza viruses in the community has now fallen to baseline levels, and it is unlikely that people presenting with an influenza-like illness have influenza.

General Practitioners and non-medical prescribers should no longer prescribe antiviral medicines (Oseltamivir and Zanamivir) for the prophylaxis and treatment of influenza-like illness in primary care on the NHS.

Hospital clinicians may continue to prescribe antivirals for patients whose illness is strongly suspected, or confirmed, to be due to influenza. For clinicians treating hospitalised patients with antivirals for suspected influenza, rapid laboratory confirmation with subtype identification is advised to support patient management.

This guidance is in line with NICE guidance and subject to GMS contract regulations, commonly known as the Grey List or Selected List Scheme (SLS).

In the event of an outbreak of suspected influenza, GPs and other local prescribers should seek advice from their local Health Protection Team.

The full NICE guidance on the use of antiviral medicines can be accessed at: <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/TA168> for treatment, and

<http://guidance.nice.org.uk/TA158> for prophylaxis.

Influenza activity reports for Wales can be found on the Public Health Wales website: www.publichealthwales.org/flu-activity

This advice stands until we write again to re-commence prescribing and supply of antiviral medicines in primary care.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Atherton', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr Frank Atherton
Chief Medical Officer / Medical Director NHS Wales

Appendix 1

To: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership to forward to:

All General Practitioners - please ensure this message is seen by all practice nurses and non-principals working in your practice and retain a copy in your 'locum information pack'.

All Community Pharmacists

Deputising services

HB Chief Pharmacists

HB Prescribing Advisers

Independent/Private clinics and Hospitals and Hospices throughout Wales

To: Local Health Boards and NHS Trusts:

Chief Executives

Medical Directors

Nurse Directors

Directors of Public Health

Hospital Principals and Chief Pharmacists

Onward distribution to:

Immunisation Leads,

Infectious Disease Departments

Acute medical units

Microbiologists

To: Public Health Wales:

Chief Executive

Director of Public Health Services

Consultants in Pharmaceutical Public Health

Consultants in Communicable Disease Control

Consultant Epidemiologists

Microbiologists

Cc: NHS Direct Wales

British Medical Association

Royal College of GPs

Royal College of Nursing

Royal College of Midwives

Royal Pharmaceutical Society

Community Pharmacy Wales

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Wales