



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



Recommendations on the use of antiviral neuraminidase inhibitors for the treatment of influenza in at-risk groups when influenza A or B virus is known to be circulating in the community

(You will have been notified by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre if this is the case)

NICE guidance (oseltamivir and zanamivir for treatment of influenza)

NICE has recommended (February 2003) that antiviral drugs are not a substitute for vaccination, which remains the most effective way of preventing illness from influenza. When influenza A or influenza B virus is circulating in the community:

- amantadine is not recommended for the treatment of influenza;
- oseltamivir or zanamivir are not recommended for the treatment of otherwise healthy individuals under 65 years with influenza even if they have contact with people with flu-like symptoms;
- oseltamivir and zanamivir are recommended (in accordance with product licensing) to treat at-risk adults who can start treatment within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms; oseltamivir is recommended for at-risk children who can start treatment within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms;

At-risk patients are defined as those aged 65 years and over or those who have one or more of the following conditions:

- chronic respiratory disease (including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma), though zanamivir should be used with caution in such patients (see product information);
- significant cardiovascular disease (excluding people with hypertension only);
- chronic renal disease;
- immunosuppression;
- diabetes mellitus.

The usual adult dose of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) is 75mg BD for five days, but should be reduced in the setting of severe renal impairment. The paediatric dose is based upon weight:

- Less than 15kg: 30mg BD
- 15-23 kg: 45mg BD

- 23-40kg: 60mg BD
- Over 13yrs or over 40Kg: same as adult.

Zanamivir (Relenza) is given by inhalation and the recommended dose is two inhalations (2 x5mg) twice daily for five days, providing a total daily inhaled dose of 20mg. Supplies of zanamivir (Relenza) in Ireland may be limited. The drug should be used with caution in people with asthma or chronic pulmonary disease, due to an increased risk of bronchospasm.

If a household or other close contact of an “at risk” person presents with symptoms of influenza, the “at-risk” individual should be informed of the increased risk of getting influenza. They should be asked to consult their GP as soon as possible if they develop symptoms consistent with influenza, to facilitate early initiation of antiviral therapy.

Details of the NICE recommendations on use of antiviral agents for influenza prophylaxis can be found at: http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/pdf/67_Flu_prophylaxis_guidance.pdf and http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/pdf/67_Flu_prophylaxis_A4_summary.pdf

Details of the NICE recommendations on use of antiviral agents for influenza therapy can be found at: http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/pdf/58_Flu_fullguidance.pdf and <http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/pdf/58flua4summary.pdf>.

Further Information

Details of Influenza Activity in Ireland are available on the HPSC website at: <http://www.ndsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/Respiratory/Influenza/Publications/20072008Season>

Details of Influenza Activity in Europe are available on the EISS website at http://www.eiss.org/cgi-files/bulletin_v2.cgi

Details of Influenza Information for Health Professionals on the HPSC website at: <http://www.ndsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/Respiratory/Influenza/Guidance>