

## Information about changes to medicines or treatments on the NHS: **Changes to liothyronine prescribing**

The NHS will be asking doctors to stop or greatly reduce the prescribing of some medicines from December 2017. This is because the medicines are:

- Not as safe as other medicines OR
- Not as good (effective) as other medicines OR
- More expensive than other medicines that do the same thing.

**One of these medicines is liothyronine (including Armour® Thyroid and liothyronine combination products).**

This document will explain why the changes are happening and where you can get more information and support.

### **What is liothyronine?**

Liothyronine (sometimes known as T3) is used to treat an underactive thyroid gland. “Underactive” means that the thyroid gland does not work as well as it should.

However, the recommended treatment for an underactive thyroid gland is a medicine called levothyroxine. Levothyroxine is changed to liothyronine in the body.

### **Why does the NHS want to reduce prescribing of liothyronine?**

There is not enough evidence to routinely use liothyronine in the treatment of an underactive thyroid gland, whereas there is a lot of evidence for the use of levothyroxine.

The British Thyroid Association (BTA) do not recommend routinely using liothyronine instead of levothyroxine in most patients with an underactive thyroid. However, they do say that a small number of patients treated with levothyroxine continue to suffer with symptoms and in these cases liothyronine may be considered.

In addition, liothyronine is extremely expensive, so it is not good value for money for most people with an underactive thyroid.

## What options are available instead of liothyronine?

People who are currently prescribed liothyronine will be reviewed by a consultant NHS endocrinologist to consider a switch to levothyroxine.

In exceptional cases, where levothyroxine has not worked and in line with the BTA guidance, a consultant endocrinologist may recommend liothyronine for individual patients after a three month trial of treatment.

## Where can I find more information and support?

- You can speak to your local pharmacist, GP or the person who prescribed the medication to you
- British Thyroid Association (BTA) Management of hypothyroidism FAQ: [www.btf-thyroid.org/images/documents/FAQ\\_for\\_BTA\\_Hypothyroidism\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.btf-thyroid.org/images/documents/FAQ_for_BTA_Hypothyroidism_Statement.pdf)
- The Patients Association can also offer support and advice: <https://www.patients-association.org.uk/> or call 020 8423 8999
- Healthwatch: [www.healthwatch.co.uk](http://www.healthwatch.co.uk)

Find out more about the medicines that are being stopped or reduced:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/medicines/items-which-should-not-be-routinely-prescribed/>