

Kia ora,

The supplier of lorazepam 1 mg tablets (brand name Ativan) has notified Pharmac of a supply issue affecting this medicine.

There is currently a two-week supply of lorazepam 1 mg tablets in Aotearoa New Zealand. The supplier has advised Pharmac that supply is not expected to resume until early to mid-August 2022.

### **What we are doing**

To help distribute the remaining supply of lorazepam 1 mg tablets as fairly as possible throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, we have asked pharmacists to **dispense a maximum of 7 days' supply at a time**.

This limit will be in place until 31 August 2022.

We are working to secure stock of lorazepam 1 mg tablets from a different supplier. Due to complexities with import and export licenses that affect controlled drugs such as lorazepam, we are not able to provide a firm timeframe for resupply at this stage.

### **Clinical advice**

Our clinical advisors inform us that most patients use lorazepam for short periods of time. We are also advised that alternative funded treatments might be suitable for some patients. These may include diazepam and clonazepam.

Some clinicians may consider temporarily transitioning patients to half a 2.5 mg tablet, although this represents a 25% increase in dose-per-tablet. (The 2.5 mg tablets are scored for simpler halving.) This will require a new prescription.

### **Actions for healthcare professionals**

- Avoid starting new patients on lorazepam 1 mg tablets until this medicine is resupplied
- Consider alternative treatment options for patients who are using lorazepam 1 mg tablets for longer periods

We acknowledge the inconvenience that this supply issue causes. Thank you for your assistance with the management of this issue.

### **Why is this happening?**

Aotearoa New Zealand, like other countries, is experiencing some constraints on its supply of medicines. The number of medicine supply issues for 2022 has remained relatively stable despite the pressures on the supply of goods caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and other local and global events.

When faced with a disruption to the supply of a medicine, Pharmac tries to ensure that there is a funded medicine available for those New Zealanders who need treatment. We work with our suppliers, and our colleagues across government, to expedite deliveries, and fund alternative brands or medicines to ensure suitable products remain available for treatment.

Pharmac will be investigating the reason for the supplier's shortfall in supply. Our contracts require suppliers to hold at least a two-month supply of medicine in the country.

## **Further information**

We will keep the medicine notices section of the Pharmac website up to date as information about this supply issue becomes available.

[Medicine notices - Pharmac website](#)

## **Please share this information**

We want to make sure that everyone who needs to know about these changes is aware of them. Please share this information with your colleagues.

Ngā mihi nui

David Hughes

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