

## COLCHICINE - SAFE PRESCRIBING - TOE THE LINE!!

- ▶ DANGEROUS WHEN NOT USED CORRECTLY
- ▶ AVOID PRESCRIBING AS A FIRST-LINE TREATMENT
- ▶ ALWAYS FOLLOW NEW, SAFER DOSING RECOMMENDATIONS
- ▶ ENSURE PATIENTS UNDERSTAND THE RISKS
- ▶ KNOW THAT EVEN A COUPLE OF TABLETS MAY BE FATAL FOR CHILDREN
- ▶ PRESCRIBE SMALLER QUANTITIES

Colchicine can cause serious dose-related adverse reactions which have caused fatalities; it is a dangerous medicine when not used correctly. Some patients are especially susceptible: older people, those with hepatic/renal impairment, and people who weigh less than 50kg.

**Avoid prescribing colchicine whenever possible.** In most patients, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), or oral steroids, are the treatment of choice.

**Using large doses of colchicine to treat acute gout is no longer appropriate,** and it is **not safe to continue dosing until gastrointestinal side-effects occur.**

**The recommended dosing of colchicine in the treatment of acute gout is now:**

**2 tablets (2 x 0.5mg tablet) at the same time,** followed by **0.5mg (1 tablet) every six hours** until relief is obtained, up to a **maximum dose of five tablets (2.5mg) in the first 24 hours,** or **6mg total over 4 days**

[Click here for further information about monitoring](#)

**Patients should be told to stop colchicine immediately** if they develop: abdominal pain, diarrhoea, or nausea and vomiting (even if acute symptoms of an attack haven't resolved). **Ensure that patients know how to use colchicine,** especially if English is not their first language.

**Children are very vulnerable to colchicine poisoning** and even small doses can be fatal; 1-2 tablets may cause death. **Please remind people to store colchicine well out of reach of children** (and grandchildren).

**Consider limiting prescriptions for acute gout to a maximum of 12 tablets per script.** Remove colchicine from any 'favourites'/personal medications list, or change the prescribing instructions to those recommended above (with a limit of 12 tablets).

### KEY REFERENCES

best practice journal; Issue 8, Sept 2007: [www.bpac.org.nz](http://www.bpac.org.nz) keyword "gout"  
NZRA consensus statement on the use of colchicine in the treatment of gout, Nov 2005: [www.rheumatology.org.nz](http://www.rheumatology.org.nz)  
Medication Alert No.9 – Colchicine. Safe and Quality Use of Medicines Group. In print. [www.safeuseofmedicines.co.nz](http://www.safeuseofmedicines.co.nz)

[CLICK HERE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON COLCHICINE AND A FULL REFERENCE LIST](#)

For further information on other high-risk medicines visit our website at: [www.saferx.co.nz](http://www.saferx.co.nz)

No: 0182-01-018, Issued Dec 2009, Review Dec 2011

DISCLAIMER: This information is provided to assist primary care health professionals with the use of prescribed medicines. Users of this information must always consider current best practice and use their clinical judgement with each patient. This information is not a substitute for individual clinical decision making. Issued by the Quality Use of Medicines Team at Waitemata District Health Board, email: [feedback@saferx.co.nz](mailto:feedback@saferx.co.nz)