

Medicines Optimisation Tips on Appropriate Use of Silver Dressings



DO follow the SIGN CHECKER for critically colonised or infected wounds in the Wound Formulary and then follow the flow chart for treatment pathway

Silver is bacteriostatic and may be useful to reduce bacterial burden in wounds that are critically colonized as a third-line antimicrobial dressing, after iodine and honey as first- and second-line choices respectively



DO prescribe the minimum quantity needed

A prescription for 5 dressings is often enough for 2 weeks of treatment if dressings are changed every 3-4 days.

In 2014/15 West Hampshire CCG spent approximately £161K on silver dressings. Some prescriptions were for as many as 100 silver dressings at a time.



DO consider stopping once the wound starts to heal or after two weeks, whichever is the sooner

Silver dressings should not usually be changed every day – if daily dressings are needed consider using an alternative and seek advice from the Specialist TVN Live Line. If after reassessment, further antimicrobial use is indicated, action and document the rationale in the patient's notes.



DO use formulary silver dressings only

If a silver dressing is to be used, **Durafiber Ag**® is the formulary product of choice. No other non-formulary silver dressing should be used unless specifically advised by a TVN for a specific patient's condition.



Do use Southern Health TVN referral process for specialist advice

Community Nurses and Nursing Homes should request prescriptions for dressings using their Dressings Order Form that provides only formulary choices. If specialist advice is required, please use the TVN referral process as detailed on Tips for Appropriate Use of Dressings.



DO NOT prescribe silver dressings as long term repeats

Silver dressings should only be prescribed as an 'acute' prescription to avoid waste and inappropriate continued use, as wounds change with time.



DO NOT prescribe non-formulary silver dressings

Dressings such as Actisorb silver and Aquacel Foam Ag are often inappropriately used, and are now not on formulary. Silicone silver dressings such as Mepilex Ag and Biatain Ag should be avoided as they tend to be very expensive and provide little added benefit. Two thirds of the items prescribed in 14/15 in WHCCG were non-formulary. £37K was spent on two products not recommended for use by the specialist TVNs. Justify any non-formulary use with a specific reason and where appropriate approval from a Specialist TVN.



DO NOT choose the wrong dressing in error

Most silver dressings have the chemical symbol 'Ag' in the name and can easily be recognised from this. However, this also means that these products tend to come at the top of the alphabetical picking list on most GP clinical systems. Care needs to be taken to avoid prescribing of a silver product by mistake as this can be costly.

e.g. Prescriptions for non-silver versions of Allewyn® or Atrauman® are often erroneously prescribed as Allewyn Ag® and Atrauman Ag® respectively.

Further Information and References

- The silver component of dressings may appear:
 - as a coating on external surfaces of the dressing: silver on the surface of the dressing comes into contact with the wound where it exerts an antimicrobial action.
 - within the structure of the dressing – either as a coating on dressing materials, within the spaces of the dressing materials, or as a compound that forms part of the dressing structure: silver within the dressing structure acts on the wound exudate, and is less likely to diffuse into the wound bed.
 - a combination of the above
- Referral criteria for TVN input (Included in the documents below)
- Tips on Appropriate Use of Dressings for Nursing Homes ([link](#))
- Tips on Appropriate Use of Dressings for Practice/Community Nurses ([link](#))

References

- Wound Formulary Handbook 2016, Basingstoke, Southampton and Winchester DPC and Portsmouth and South East Hampshire APC
- Southern Health Specialist Tissue Viability Service
- NHS HIGHLANDS Wound Formulary and Wound Management Guidelines
<http://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/Publications/Documents/Guidelines/Wound%20Formulary/NHS%20Highland%20Wound%20Management%20Guidelines%20and%20Formulary.pdf>
- International Consensus : Appropriate Use of Silver dressings
www.woundsinternational.com/media/issues/567/.../content_10381.pdf
- PrescQIPP Bulletin 53 March 2014 v2.0 Wound Care: Silver Dressings