# CHMP proposes to suspend Ranitidine medicines in the EU

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**Information on Ranitidine medicines**

- Ranitidine is part of a class of medicines known as H2 (histamine 2) blockers. Ranitidine acts by blocking histamine receptors in the stomach and reducing the production of stomach acid
- Ranitidine is used for the treatment and prevention of conditions such as heartburn and stomach ulcers.

**Information from the EMA about suspension of Ranitidine products due to the presence of NDMA impurities**

The Committee for medicinal products for human use (CHMP) carried out a review on ranitidine following request of the European Commission (EC). Following the review, the CHMP has recommended suspension of ranitidine-containing medicinal products in all the EU Member States due to the presence of low levels of an impurity called N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA). The CHMP has also proposed conditions for lifting the suspension of ranitidine medicines, including requirements for companies to provide more data. Despite the CHMP recommendations, the final decision on this matter will be taken by the EC, which will adopt its final decision in due course.

CHMP recommendations are the outcome of a European review started after NDMA was detected in some products after tests. Since 2018 nitrosamine compounds have been detected in a number of medicines, with EU regulators taking action to identify the possible sources of the impurities and set strict new requirements for manufacturers. Based on animal studies, NDMA is classified as a probable human carcinogen (a substance that could cause cancer). However, NDMA is present in some foods and water supplies and ingesting a very low doses it is not expected to cause harm.

Available safety data do not show that ranitidine increases the risk of cancer, and any possible risk is likely to be very low. However, NDMA has been found in several ranitidine medicines above levels considered acceptable, and there are unresolved questions about the source of the impurities.

Some evidence shows that NDMA may form from the degradation of ranitidine itself with increasing levels seen over its shelf life. From available data, it is not clear whether NDMA can also be formed from ranitidine inside the body, since some studies suggest that it can, while others do not. Given the uncertainties, the CHMP has recommended a precautionary suspension of these medicines in the EU.

Alternative treatments for reducing levels of stomach acid in patients with conditions such as heartburn and stomach ulcers are available, therefore patients should contact their healthcare professionals if they need advice about which medicine to take. Many ranitidine medicines have been suspended within the EU for several months because national authorities have recalled them as a precaution while the EMA review was ongoing.

EMA will continue working with national authorities, EDQM, the EC and international partners to make sure that effective measures are taken to prevent the presence of these impurities in medicines.

The CHMP opinion will now be forwarded to the European Commission, which will issue a final legally binding decision applicable in all EU Member States.

## In Malta

### For Healthcare Professionals

- Due to the presence of NDMA impurities, the CHMP recommended to suspend ranitidine medicines in the EU
- The exact source of the impurity is yet to be determined, but it is possible that NDMA may form from the degradation of ranitidine even under normal storage conditions. Some studies indicated that ranitidine may cause additional endogenous NDMA formation by its degradation or metabolism in the gastro-intestinal tract, although other studies did not show the same results
- Available clinical and epidemiological data do not show that ranitidine increases the risk of cancer
- Advice patients on alternative treatments while ranitidine medicines are unavailable
- Advice patients who need assistance, including those who have been taking ranitidine without a prescription, on how to treat or manage conditions such as heartburn and gastric ulcers.

### Advice for Patients

- Due to the presence of low levels of an impurity called NDMA, the CHMP recommended to suspend ranitidine medicines in the EU, as a precaution
- Alternative medicines are available. Contact your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about which alternative to take.
- If you have been prescribed ranitidine, your doctor will advise you on an alternative.

For more information please see the European Medicines Agency's Ranitidine referral page.

### Reporting Adverse Drug Reactions

Healthcare professionals and patients are encouraged to maintain vigilance on ranitidine medicinal products. Suspected Adverse Drug Reactions (side effects) may be reported using the Medicines Authority Form and sending it to Sir Temi Żammit Buildings, Malta Life Sciences Park, San Ġwann SĠN 3000 or online to **http://www.medicinesauthority.gov.mt/adrportal** or to the marketing authorisation holder or their local representatives.

**Post-Licensing Directorate**
**Medicines Authority**

***Healthcare professionals and patients are encouraged to regularly check the Medicines Authority website for product safety updates as these are issued on an ongoing basis.***

**Feedback Form**

The Medicines Authority thanks you for the time taken to read this safety circular. The dissemination of safety circulars is an important process whereby Regulatory Authorities can communicate important issues with respect to the safety of medicines, in order to protect and enhance public health

The Medicines Authority kindly invites your anonymous feedback about the regulatory action being communicated. This may be returned by folding this formt (address side up), stapling the ends and then posting (no stamp required)

**Feedback:**

We thank you for your interest and look forward to hearing your opinion.

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