Date: February 28, 2022

Subject: Important safety information related to prescribing and dispensing of hydrocodone syrup

This material was developed by Pendopharm, a division of Pharmascience Inc., as part of the risk minimization plan for hydrocodone bitartrate syrup. This material is not intended for promotional use.

Hydrodocone bitartate is indicated for the control of exhausting, non-productive cough in adults.

Dear Healthcare Professional,

Kindly note the following important safety information on the recommended dose and the necessary dosage adjustments in certain situations.

Summary:

- Hydrocodone bitartrate is a potential drug of **abuse** and **misuse**, which can lead to overdose and death
- Hydrocodone bitartrate suspension is provided in a **500 mL bottle** which in most cases is more drug than may be required for a single treatment regime for the labelled indication for use
- The physician and pharmacist must ensure that **no extra drug will be left** when the course of treatment is finished, which could end up being used inappropriately or diverted into the community for inappropriate misuse or abuse

How to calculate the volume of drug required for a normal course of treatment:

- **Each 1 mL of syrup contains 1 mg of hydrocodone**. The recommended dose for adults is 5 mg (5 mL of syrup) not less than 4 hours apart, after meals and at bedtime with food or a glass of milk, not to exceed 30 mg (30 mL of syrup) in a 24-hour period. Maximum single dose is 15 mg (15 mL of syrup).
- It is imperative to **only prescribe and/or dispense the total volume that would be needed for either:**
    - the *duration* of treatment prescribed by the doctor (i.e. the total number of days) or
    - *7 days total* (i.e. the volume required to administer **210 mg** of hydrocodone over a 7-day period) **whichever volume is lesser.**

Single dose in adults**	**Maximum dose in a 24-hour period**	**Maximum dose for a 7-day period**
5 mg (**5 mL** of syrup) **every 4 hours**	5 mg * 6 = 30 mg (**30 mL** of syrup)	30 mg * 7 = 210 mg (**210 mL** of syrup)

** Maximum single dose is 15 mg (15 mL of syrup)

When prescribing hydrocodone bitartrate:

- only prescribe sufficient quantity of hydrocodone based on the individual patient's required dose and course of treatment based on the length of time typically needed to adequately resolve the cough
- the risk of fatal or non-fatal adverse events increases with higher doses. The coughing should be assessed routinely to confirm the most appropriate dose and the need for further use of hydrocodone.

When dispensing hydrocodone bitartrate:

- calculate the exact volume of drug required to fill the prescription and then fill the prescription by supplying this volume in a pharmacist supplied bottle with sealed child-proof cap.
- ensure the bottled is properly labelled with all information required as per provincial laws governing the practice of pharmacy

Additionally, practitioners and/or pharmacists dispensing hydrocodone must provide the handout that is entitled "Opioid Medicines – Information for Patients and Families" directly to the patient.

Background

- Because of the risks of addiction, abuse, and misuse with opioids, even at recommended doses, and because of the greater risks of overdose and death with controlled release opioid formulations, hydrocodone should only be used in patients for whom alternative non-opioid treatment options are ineffective, not tolerated, or would be otherwise inadequate to provide appropriate cough management.
- Each patient's risk should be assessed prior to prescribing hydrocodone, and all patients should be monitored regularly for the development of opioid addiction, abuse and misuse.
- Serious, life-threatening, or fatal respiratory depression may occur with use of hydrocodone. Infants exposed in-utero or through breast milk are at risk of life-threatening respiratory depression upon delivery or when nursed. Patients should be monitored for respiratory depression, especially during initiation of hydrocodone or following a dose increase. Further, patients should be instructed of the hazards related to taking opioids including fatal overdose.

Reporting adverse events:

Managing marketed health product-related side effects depends on health care professionals and consumers reporting them. Any case of addiction, abuse, misuse, diversion and medication error, or other serious or unexpected side effects in patients receiving hydrocodone should be reported to Pharmascience or Health Canada.

✓ **Pharmascience Inc.**
- Call toll-free at 1-888-550-6060;
- Contact the Pharmacovigilance department at Pharmascience Inc. by phone 514-344-0764 or by email at adr@pharmascience.com

✓ **Health Canada**
- Call toll-free at 1-866-234-2345; or
- Visit Health Canada's Web page on Adverse Reaction Reporting (https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medeffect-canada/adverse-reaction-reporting.html).

We thank you for your collaboration.

Yours sincerely,

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