



**HM PRISON  
SERVICE**

Public Sector Prisons

**Prison Service Instruction**

Number  
**34/2007**

**TITLE**

**RE-INTRODUCTION OF DISINFECTING TABLETS**

**PROCESS**

Promotion of Healthcare

**IMPLEMENTATION  
DATE**

15 October 2007

**EXPIRY  
DATE**

14 October 2008

**CONTAINS MANDATORY INSTRUCTIONS**

*For Action*

Governing Governors, Directors and  
Controllers of Contracted-out prisons

*Monitored by*

Area Managers, ROMS  
Offender Health

*For Information*

All Prison Staff

*On authority of*

Prison Service Management Board  
National Commissioners Support Bureau  
Department of Health

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*Other Processes Affected*

None

**NOTES**

This PSI updates and replaces PSI 05/2005.

Issued

27/09/07

## RE-INTRODUCTION OF DISINFECTING TABLETS

### Introduction and Purpose

1. This PSI, which replaces PSI 05/2005, confirms that disinfecting tablets will be made available to prisoners in 2007 and explains the arrangements being put in place to ensure that their introduction proceeds smoothly.
2. Blood-borne viruses (BBVs) are transmitted through infected body fluids (e.g. blood, semen). This group of viruses includes Hepatitis B (HBV), Hepatitis C (HCV) and HIV. Infection by these viruses can cause serious illness or even death. There is a vaccine, available to prisoners, against Hepatitis B but the only defence against infection with HIV and HCV is prevention of exposure. BBVs are significantly more common among prisoners than their peers in the community, especially so among drug-using prisoners (either current or ex-injecting drug users).
3. The Prison Service's drug strategy and other measures have achieved considerable success in reducing drug misuse in prison. However, BBVs are readily spread when drugs users share contaminated injecting equipment. Because the possession of injecting equipment is strictly prohibited in prisons, the small core of prisoners who persist in injecting are highly likely to share any such items that they manage to acquire. As part of the Prison Service's overall strategy to reduce the risk to prisoners, staff and the wider community of becoming infected with BBVs, it is planned to make disinfecting tablets available to prisoners at all establishments. This will enable those prisoners who continue to inject drugs to clean illicitly held injecting and other equipment before it is passed on to others. Similar arrangements have worked well in Scottish prisons since 1993.
4. The disinfecting tablets to be used are a generic form of the tablets normally used to sterilize babies' feeding bottles. They can be used to disinfect a broad range of items that may, through their routine use, become contaminated with blood or other potentially infectious body fluids (e.g. razors, toothbrushes etc). Therefore, the disinfectant tablets are being marketed in prison for general cleaning purposes of personal items as well as decontamination of injecting equipment and other associated paraphernalia. Full information about the tablets, including safety aspects, are available in leaflets and guidance.

### Background

5. Disinfecting tablets were first made available at all Prison Service establishments in England and Wales in September 1995 but were withdrawn later that year after concerns were raised about their safe use in a custodial setting. The tablets were subjected to a number of tests by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in response to concerns about risks of fire, and by the Poisons Unit at Guys Hospital in connection with any risks of poisoning through ingestion. In both cases the risks were found to be negligible. After those concerns had been allayed, the Prison Service re-introduced disinfecting tablets on a trial basis at 11 establishments in 1998/99 as a pilot project. This project was evaluated by an independent team from The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) who judged it to have been successful and recommended that tablets be re-introduced across the prison estate as a safe and effective method of reducing the risk of transmission of BBVs in prisons. The Home Secretary accepted that recommendation.
6. Further work was commissioned by the Prison Service to examine some of the health and safety issues identified by prison staff and others. The fire safety aspects were reviewed and the Prison Service was advised that to reduce any potential risk no more than 34 tablets should be held in a cell at any one time. (No maximum number applies for other common areas of an establishment). The safety data sheet information reflects this. In addition, it was decided to make metal wall-mounted dispensers available to

establishments to ensure that there is both safe and discrete access to the tablets. These dispensers are currently installed on a trial basis in four prisons to ensure that the design of the dispenser unit is fit for purpose.

### **The Re-Introduction Programme**

7. It is now planned to make supplies of tablets, dispensers and information leaflets for both staff and prisoners available to establishments from October 2007. Offender Health have engaged a project co-ordinator based in the Care Services Improvement Partnership London Office (CSIP). He will be in contact with establishments to ensure that there is a nominated person in charge of the programme for the establishment, and to confirm when initial supplies will be delivered.

The following groups and establishments will be excluded from the re-introduction programme:

- The Young People's Secure Estate (under 18s). Please refer to PSO 4950 (Regimes for Young People) for further information
- Immigration Removal Centres Dover, Haslar and Lindholme

### **Impact and Resource Assessment**

8. Establishments will be required to nominate a person to take charge of the programme to introduce disinfectant tablets. Guidance to support the re-introduction programme will be available from CSIP London on request. During the first year of their re-introduction this person will also be responsible for reporting to CSIP London on usage of the tablets and on any adverse incidents, to inform an assessment of the success of the programme.
9. Initial supplies of tablets, dispensers and information leaflets will be provided by Offender Health from central funds. Establishments can continue to purchase further supplies of tablets through their usual cleaning procurement procedures. The continued funding of the tablets will be met by NHS Primary Care Trusts/Local Health Boards. Contracted-out establishments who wish to reclaim funding should contact Chris Thornton, Commercial and Competitions Unit, NOMS, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor SW, Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF on 07884 251 458 or [chris.thornton12@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:chris.thornton12@justice.gsi.gov.uk)

### **Mandatory Action**

10. Governing Governors and Directors of Contracted-out Prisons must:
  - take note that tablets will begin to be re-introduced from October 2007
  - inform staff accordingly
  - where they have not already done so, identify a member of staff to take responsibility for the introduction of tablets and to liaise with CSIP London on implementation issues
  - assist CSIP London to monitor the success of the programme.

### **Advice and Information**

11. Once the implementation programme is underway, establishments will be contacted by the CSIP London support team and their contact details will be provided at that time.

**Offender Health Contact Point**

12. Further general policy information can be obtained from Peter Burke, Offender Health, Department of Health, Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds, LS2 7UE on 0113 254 5030 or peter.burke@dh.gsi.gov.uk

(signed)

(signed)

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