

HALTON REGION PUBLIC HEALTH • Office of the Medical Officer of Health

TEL: 905-825-6000 • TOLL FREE: 1-866-442-5866 • FAX: 905-825-1444

TO: Halton Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Emergency Departments, Halton Midwives

FROM: Dr. Joanna Oda, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: November 11, 2020

RE: Erythromycin ophthalmic ointment shortage

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### QUICK FACTS

- Ontario is experiencing an ongoing national shortage of erythromycin ophthalmic ointment, indicated for the prophylaxis of ophthalmia neonatorum.
- There is a shortage of erythromycin ophthalmic ointment (1gm packaging size) in Canada. Two suppliers are reporting that product will return to market on January 15, 2021 and March 31, 2021. There is no active shortage report for the 3.5g product.
- The supply of erythromycin should be monitored closely and, if adequate supplies are not available, administration should be based on the attending health care professional's assessment of the situation.
- A Screening Algorithm and Response to Lab Result Algorithm has been developed by The Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health and London Health Sciences Centre to assist clinical decision-making (links below).

### KEY MESSAGES FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

- Hospitals and health care providers should include a note in the newborn health record that is provided to parents indicating whether erythromycin ophthalmic ointment was administered.
- Please continue to work with your LHIN Drug Shortages Lead for further information and to support reallocation requests.
- Once the supply of erythromycin is returned to normal stock levels, routine administration of the ophthalmic prophylaxis to the eyes of newborns should continue as required under Regulation 557 Communicable Diseases – General under the Health Promotion and Protection Act.

### KEY MESSAGES FOR PATIENTS

- Parents should be made aware of the symptoms of ophthalmia neonatorum and advised to monitor for these symptoms within the first four weeks of life and to seek medical treatment at any signs of infection.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Screening Algorithm](#) and [Response to Lab Results](#) for Management of Infants & Mothers During Erythromycin Eye Ointment Shortage, Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health.

Please report all suspected/confirmed cases of [Diseases of Public Health Significance](#) to Public Health immediately by calling 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866.

PLEASE POST IN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS AND PHYSICIAN LOUNGES

IF YOU CAN'T ACCESS HYPERLINKS, PLEASE SIGN UP FOR ELECTRONIC UPDATES BY EMAILING [DOCTORS@HALTON.CA](mailto:DOCTORS@HALTON.CA)