



PATIENT INFORMATION

**MEDICINES DERIVED FROM  
ANIMAL PRODUCTS**



## Which Medicines Contain Animal Products?

Numerous medicines contain ingredients derived from animals, usually pigs or cows.

These include:

- Heparin type medicines to prevent or treat blood clots
- Some Insulins
- Pancreatic enzyme supplements
- Some vaccines (MMR and nasal influenza)
- Some vitamin D preparations
- Treatments to help the lungs of pre-term babies develop
- Gelatin capsules
- Inactive ingredients in medicines

This may have implications for some patients e.g. Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, vegetarians and vegans.

## My Beliefs Do Not Allow Me to Take Medicines That Come From Animals

We understand you may have concerns in accepting treatment with one of these products.

*For example:*

One of the principles of Islamic law states that, “Necessities overrule prohibitions”. As a general rule Muslims are not allowed any form of pork but when there is no suitable alternative and there is a risk of health deterioration Islamic law does allow medicines derived from pigs.

The Muslim Council of Britain encourages Muslim patients who wish to discuss this matter to seek advice from their local Muslim chaplain (imam).

Pork is strictly forbidden in the diet in Judaism but food and medicines not taken orally are not considered ‘eating’. Thus there are no restrictions regarding injections. In the ill patient, porcine derived oral medication is allowed if it’s not considered ‘edible’. When in doubt consult a rabbi.

Vegetarians are likely to have concerns about animal - derived medicines.

You may wish to discuss this with your doctor, pharmacist or your religious leader if appropriate.

## Are There Any Alternatives?

In some cases other medicines are available but these may not be as effective, or may not be suitable for you, or may have more side effects.

In other cases there aren’t any alternatives.

## What Are The Alternatives?

- **Heparin type medicines:**

In some cases you can have a treatment that does not come from pigs. In other cases there may be an alternative but it may not be suitable for you, or as effective, or it may have more side effects.

In other situations there is no alternative. Discuss with your doctor, nurse or midwife.

- **Insulin:**

Most people are treated with human insulin. If you change from animal insulin the dose may need to change and you may need to check your blood sugar more often.

- **Medicines to treat diseases of the pancreas:**

There are no alternative treatments.

- **Vaccines (Measles, Mumps and Rubella and nasal influenza):**

Vaccines which does not come from pigs is available. Ask your GP or doctor for this option.

- **Treatments to help the lungs of pre-term babies develop:**

There are only two drugs available. One comes from pigs and the other from cows.

- **Vitamin D preparations**

Ask the pharmacist if a preparation that is suitable for vegetarians or vegans is available.

- **Gelatin capsules:**

Ask the pharmacist if there is a different form of your medicine such as syrup. If not we may be able to give you similar medicine with the same effects.

- **Inactive ingredients**

Ask the pharmacist if there is a different form of the medicine that does not contain animal derived inactive ingredients.

## Where Can I Find Out More Information?

If you are concerned about having any of these treatments, please speak to your nurse, midwife, supervisor of midwives or doctor who can arrange for you to discuss this with a pharmacist or religious leader.

## Useful Contact Numbers and Websites

NHS Direct  
Telephone: 0845 4647

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

**If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.**

### **Patient Experience**

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

### **Feedback**

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

### **How to contact PALS:**

**Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: [wah-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:wah-tr.PET@nhs.net)**

### **Opening times:**

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that a voicemail service is in use at busy times, but messages will be returned as quickly as possible.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.