

## Position statement on the prescribing of probiotics

**In line with NHS England's guidance on conditions for which over-the-counter items should not be routinely prescribed,<sup>1</sup> West Suffolk CCG and Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG do not routinely support the prescribing of any probiotic for any indication.**

### Rationale

- The Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) reviewed products VSL#3 and Vivomixx for continued inclusion in Part XV of the Drug Tariff. The Committee concluded that the evidence did not sufficiently demonstrate that the products are clinically effective.<sup>2</sup>
- VSL#3 and Vivomixx have not been available as prescription products, since 01 November 2018 and 01 January 2019 respectively, under the ACBS category for ileoanal pouchitis.
- The British Society of Gastroenterology guidelines for the management of inflammatory bowel disease in adults state that VSL#3<sup>®</sup> probiotic therapy may be used to treat and prevent pouchitis. Its efficacy is lost soon after stopping the treatment.<sup>3</sup>
- A Cochrane review investigated use of probiotics to treat active ulcerative colitis (UC). There is limited evidence that probiotics may reduce disease activity, but not enough to recommend them to treat active UC. Larger, well designed randomised controlled trials are needed to determine this.<sup>4</sup>
- There is no clear evidence to support any role of probiotics in the maintenance of Crohn's disease after surgically or medically-induced remission.<sup>3</sup>
- Probiotics are available for purchase over-the-counter by patients if they wish, but they should be advised about the lack of evidence of clinical benefit.

### References

1. NHS England. Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs.  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs/>
2. UKMi. Probiotics VSL#3 and Vivomixx have been removed from the Drug Tariff, following review by Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS). Available at <https://www.medicinesresources.nhs.uk/en/Medicines-Awareness/Guidance-and-Advice/Drug-Prescribing/Probiotics-VSL3-and-Vivomixx-have-been-removed-from-the-Drug-Tariff-following-review-by-Advisory-Committee-on-Borderline-Substances-ACBS-/>
3. Mowat C, Cole A, Windsor A et al. IBD section of the British Society of Gastroenterology. Guidelines for the management of inflammatory bowel disease in adults. Gut 2011; 60(5): 571-607.
4. Mallon PT, McKay D, Kirk SJ, Gardiner K. Probiotics for induction of remission in ulcerative colitis. Cochrane Database of Systemic Reviews 2007, Issue 4, Art No: CD005573.DOI:10.1002/14651858.CD005573.pub2. Available at <https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD005573.pub2/epdf/full>