

Media release

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New migraine treatment could be on the tip of your tongue

Wafers that dissolve on the tongue will become a new treatment option for people who suffer from painful migraine headaches from next month.

The new treatment, rizatriptan wafers (Maxalt Melt), will be particularly useful for people whose migraines cause them to feel so ill they can't swallow tablets, says PHARMAC's deputy medical director Dr Dilky Rasiah.

Migraines may affect up to 15% of adults and can be extremely debilitating, causing people to take time off work and in some cases requiring admittance to hospital. International studies show migraines are more common among women than men.

A range of treatments are subsidised that can be used to treat migraines. These include painkillers and anti-nausea treatments such as aspirin and metoclopramide, up to specific anti-migraine treatments like sumatriptan, which is available as both a tablet and as an injection.

However, up to 30% of people don't respond to, or can't tolerate, sumatriptan. Rizatriptan may provide a useful alternative for those people, says Dr Rasiah.

PHARMAC's clinical advisory committee PTAC had identified an unmet need for a second 'triptan', and rizatriptan fits that need.

"This is a step forward for people who suffer migraines," says Dr Rasiah.

"The wafers are more convenient for people whose migraines are so severe they feel nauseous or who have trouble swallowing."

"We already fund a number of migraine treatments and pain relief medicines, but the advantage of this new one is that it is a wafer that dissolves on the tongue and doesn't necessarily have to be swallowed with water."

Rizatriptan will be fully funded without restriction from 1 June.

ENDS

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