Oral drugs

Consider oral diazepam in children and young people if spasticity is contributing to one or more of the following:

- discomfort or pain
- muscle spasms (for example, night-time muscle spasms)
- functional disability.

Diazepam is particularly useful if a rapid effect is desirable (for example, in a pain crisis).

Consider oral baclofen if spasticity is contributing to one or more of the following:

- discomfort or pain
- muscle spasms (for example, night-time muscle spasms)
- functional disability.

Baclofen is particularly useful if a sustained long-term effect is desired (for example, to relieve continuous discomfort or to improve motor function).

If oral diazepam is initially used because of its rapid onset of action, consider changing to oral baclofen if long-term treatment is indicated.

Give oral diazepam treatment as a bedtime dose. If the response is unsatisfactory consider:

- increasing the dose **or**
- adding a daytime dose.

Start oral baclofen treatment with a low dose and increase the dose stepwise over about 4 weeks to achieve the optimum therapeutic effect.

Continue using oral diazepam or oral baclofen if they have a clinical benefit and are well tolerated, but think about stopping the treatment whenever the child or young person's management programme is reviewed and at least every 6 months.

If adverse effects (such as drowsiness) occur with oral diazepam or oral baclofen, think about reducing the dose or stopping treatment.

If the response to oral diazepam and oral baclofen used individually for 4–6 weeks is unsatisfactory, consider a trial of combined treatment using both drugs.

If a child or young person has been receiving oral diazepam and/or baclofen for several weeks, ensure that when stopping these drugs the dose is reduced in stages to avoid withdrawal symptoms.

In children and young people with spasticity in whom dystonia is considered to contribute significantly to problems with posture, function and pain, consider a trial of oral drug treatment, for example with trihexyphenidyl,levodopa or baclofen.