When to use SGLT-2 inhibitors

What are SGLT-2 inhibitors?

- Sodium glucose cotransporter inhibitors (SGLT-2 inhibitors) are sometimes known as "gliflozins"
- They reduce blood glucose levels by acting on the kidneys to increase the amount of glucose excreted in urine.
- In addition reductions in blood pressure and weight can occur.
- More recently they have been found to reduce the development and progression of kidney disease and heart failure, even in those without diabetes.
- In the UK the available gliflozins are marketed under the following names:
  - Canagliflozin (Invokana) 100-300mg
  - Dapagliflozin (Forxiga) 5-10mg
  - Empagliflozin (Jardiance) 10-25mg
  - Ertugliflozin (Steglatro) 5-15mg

Side-effects of SGLT-2 medicines

For most people the benefits of taking this medication outweigh the possible side effects and include reduction in the risk of heart attack, heart failure and kidney failure. However, it is important, as with all medications, to be aware of possible side effects and what to do about them.

Main side effects:
- These drugs can cause genital infections (thrush) and less common urine infections in some cases. These are more common in women than men and thrush can be treated with over-the-counter medications from pharmacies.
- There are a couple of more uncommon adverse events noted in people with diabetes:
  - Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA): This is a serious condition in which acidic substances called ketones build up in the body to dangerous levels. It is a serious complication of type 1 diabetes but can occur less commonly in type 2 diabetes also.
  - In some studies they have been reported to be associated with foot problems and therefore may need to be avoided in people with active diabetic foot problems (infected ulcer, or active problem with foot circulation).

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Urine infections (UTIs)

- The risk of UTIs can be reduced by increasing your fluid intake (unless told not to by your health professionals), fully emptying your bladder by repeat urination. Some people find sugar free cranberry juice of help.
- Symptoms of UTIs include:
  - Fever or chills
  - Increased frequency of passing urine or burning sensation when passing urine
  - Pain in loin or blood in urine
  - If you have concern, seek medical advice

Development of foot complications

- There is a possible increase in foot complications in patients at high risk, and therefore good foot care is recommended.
- If you have an active foot problem e.g. infected ulcer, circulatory problem causing rest pain or skin discolouration, withhold the SGLT-2 drugs until advised by a doctor or member of the diabetic foot team.

SGLT-2 inhibitors should be avoided if:

- You are pregnant or breast feeding
- At risk of becoming pregnant whilst using the drugs e.g. sexually active but not using any contraception.

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