formation of toxic substances, an acceptable limit is the time taken for 10% decomposition of the drug. When toxic substances are produced stricter limits may be imposed. Because of the risk of microbial contamination a maximum time limit of 24 hours may be appropriate for additions made elsewhere than in hospital pharmacies offering central additive service.
Certain injections must be protected from light during continuous infusion to minimise oxidation, e.g. sodium nitroprusside.

Drugs given by continuous intravenous infusion to neonates

The information provided in *BNF for Children* covers dilution with *Glucose intravenous infusion* 5% and 10% and *Sodium chloride intravenous infusion* 0.9%. Compatibility with glucose 5% and with sodium chloride 0.9% indicates compatibility with *Sodium chloride and glucose intravenous infusion*.
Infusion of a large volume of hypotonic solution should be avoided, therefore care should be taken if water for injections is used.

Prescribing in hepatic impairment

Overview

Children have a large reserve of hepatic metabolic capacity and modification of the choice and dosage of drugs is usually unnecessary even in apparently severe liver disease. However, special consideration is required in the following situations:

- liver failure characterised by severe derangement of liver enzymes and profound jaundice; the use of sedative drugs, opioids, and drugs such as diuretics and amphotericin p. 387 which produce hypokalaemia may precipitate hepatic encephalopathy;
- impaired coagulation, which can affect response to oral anticoagulants;
- in cholestatic jaundice elimination may be impaired of drugs such as fusidic acid p. 371 and rifampicin p. 379 which are excreted in the bile;
- in hypoproteinaemia, the effect of highly protein-bound drugs such as phenytoin p. 211, prednisolone p. 458, warfarin sodium p. 99, and benzodiazepines may be increased;
- use of hepatotoxic drugs is more likely to cause toxicity in children with liver disease; such drugs should be avoided if possible;
- in neonates, particularly preterm neonates, and also in infants metabolic pathways may differ from older children and adults because liver enzyme pathways may be immature.

Where care is needed when prescribing in hepatic impairment, this is indicated under the relevant drug in *BNF for Children*.

Prescribing in renal impairment

Issues encountered in renal impairment

The use of drugs in children with reduced renal function can give rise to problems for several reasons:

- reduced renal excretion of a drug or its metabolites may produce toxicity;
- sensitivity to some drugs is increased even if elimination is unimpaired;
- many side-effects are tolerated poorly by children with renal impairment;
- some drugs are not effective when renal function is reduced;
- neonates, particularly preterm, may have immature renal function.

Many of these problems can be avoided by reducing the dose or by using alternative drugs.

Principles of dose adjustment in renal impairment

The level of renal function below which the dose of a drug must be reduced depends on the proportion of the drug eliminated by renal excretion and its toxicity.
For many drugs with only minor or no dose-related side-effects, very precise modification of the dose regimen is unnecessary and a simple scheme for dose reduction is sufficient.
For more toxic drugs with a small safety margin dose regimens based on glomerular filtration rate should be used. When both efficacy and toxicity are closely related to