

MEDIA RELEASE

REVIEW YOUR MEDICATION **NOW – YOUR GP AND PHARMACIST
ARE HERE TO HELP!**

When did **you** last discuss the tablets and medicines you are taking with your GP or pharmacist? Many of us on regular medication simply fill in a repeat prescription form without ever thinking about whether we still need the medicines we are taking or whether a change of prescription is necessary. NHS North Somerset is appealing to patients across the patch to see use the Autumn season to talk to their pharmacist or GP about their medication.

Anyone receiving long term medication should have a regular medicines review from their GP and discuss the use of their medicines with their pharmacist. This can help ensure that each they are receiving the appropriate type and quantity of essential medication.

Explained Debbie Campbell of NHS North Somerset Medicines Management: “The benefits of patients taking the opportunity to have a review of their medication by their GP and pharmacist are two-fold. It ensures that the patient is receiving the appropriate medication and dosage for their condition. This will give them the best chance of keeping any condition under control, preventing more serious conditions. Crucially this will also help the NHS make valuable savings overall on its annual bill.”

Waste medicines are costing the country an estimated £300 million a year. In North Somerset alone, £3 million is wasted on unused or partially used medication. That’s equivalent to the cost of:

- 80 more MacMillan Nurses for patients with cancer and their families
or
- 198 Neo natal cots and equipment for Special Care Baby Units
or
- 600 extra hip and knee replacements
or
- 420 more Essential heart operations

The financial cost of the waste medicines themselves is only part of a larger problem. When medicines are not taken correctly, patients do not get the expected health benefits – the result is not only waste medicines, but also poor health outcomes, wasted time for health professionals, and unnecessary health, social and environmental costs.

So what is a waste medicine? Added Debbie Campbell: “It is any medicine that is not taken correctly, in order to achieve the intended therapeutic outcome,. Usually this means medicines that are not taken at all; but it could also mean items that are taken infrequently or at irregular intervals; inhalers that are used incorrectly, or any other instance of medicines not being used as intended by the prescriber.

Medicines are wasted for a variety of reasons. Audits of medicines returned to community pharmacies have identified various reasons for wastage. Patients stop taking their medicines because they experience side effects, because their doctor changes their treatment or the dose, or simply because they decide they do not want to take them any longer. These audits also show that around half of returns are unopened packs, indicating that many patients are ordering and receiving dispensed medicines that they do not even begin to take. And once a medicine has been dispensed it cannot be re-used even if returned to a pharmacy completely unopened.

How you can help NHS North Somerset save money:

- Let your GP or Pharmacist know if you've stopped taking any of your medicines
- Check what medicines you still have at home before re-ordering
- Discuss your medication with your GP or Pharmacist on a regular basis
- Think carefully before ticking all the boxes on your repeat prescription forms and only tick those you really need
- If you don't need the medicine please don't order it! If you need the medicine in the future you can still request it.
- If you need to go into hospital, please remember to take all your medicines with you in a clearly marked bag.
- Please also remember that your medicines are prescribed only for you; it's not safe to share them with anyone else
- Let your pharmacist know if you have trouble remembering to take your medicines. They may be able to advise on ways to help.
- Even if you never open them, once medicines have left the Pharmacy, they cannot be recycled or used by anyone else.
- Please bring your unused medicines to the Pharmacy for safe disposal.
- NEVER dispose of your unused or unwanted medicines down the toilet
- Return out of date medicines to your pharmacy or dispensary for safe disposal
- If your medicines change - return your old medicines to the pharmacy for safe disposal to avoid mixing them up with your new medicines
- Don't stockpile medication - it is a safety risk for children and others who might take them and your medication might change before you have a chance to take all your supplies
- Store medicines in an appropriate place out of reach of children

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

- NHS North Somerset is the local Primary Care Trust for North Somerset. The trust was established in April 2002 to ensure the provision of the highest quality healthcare services to the residents of North Somerset. It was recently assessed as one of the most improved PCTs in England by the Care Quality Commission.

Press Release issued by Danielle Hill at NHS North Somerset. For more information please contact her on 01275 546896 or at Danielle.hill@nsomerset-pct.nhs.uk