

## Points to remember

- Money wasted means less is available for other patient services
- Making changes to your medicines does not mean that you are receiving a reduced quality service
- If you have a leaflet or a letter which gives information about the changes to your medicines, read it carefully and keep it for reference
- Always follow the directions printed on the medicine label

## Further Information

As with all medication, there is a possibility you may experience side effects. Usually these are mild and get better with time. For more information, always read the leaflet that comes with your medication and discuss any concerns with your local pharmacist (chemist) or doctor.

## Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)

We provide confidential advice and support, helping you to sort out any concerns you may have about the care provided by the NHS and guiding you through the different services available. PALS can give information and help you get the best from your care.

Contact PALS on Freephone:  
**0800 587 4132**

## Medication Changes

### A Guide for Patients



**Getting value out of the medicines you need.**

Why do we make changes to your prescribed medicine?

**NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney is responsible for managing the drugs budget spent by doctors in our area. During 2011 more than £37.6 million was spent in Great Yarmouth and Waveney on 4.5 million prescription items.**

The Medicines Management Team may advise changes to medicines for many reasons, including:

- New safety concerns
- New evidence about the benefits of a drug
- New treatment guidelines

It is also important that we make best use of the money we spend on medicines, without reducing the quality of the treatment patients receive.

If more money is spent on medicines than is available, the extra money has to come from other areas of healthcare. This means that we may not be able to provide all the services we would like.

The Medicines Management Team continually check the cost of the medicines to see if savings can be made. The team also helps GP practices to make such changes to patients' medication when necessary.

## What sort of changes do we make?

**The changes we make can be split into different categories:**

### Generic Switches:

The generic name of a medicine is the actual name of the active ingredient, rather than the trade name, which is chosen by the manufacturer. For example, Panadol is just one brand name for the medicine paracetamol.

New medicines are usually only manufactured by one company as a branded product, with a patent licence. When the patent expires other companies can manufacture the same medicine as a generic product. The medicine is manufactured to the same tight quality controls and contains the same active ingredients, although the appearance may be slightly different. Competition between different manufacturer's means that medicines prescribed by the generic name usually costs much less.

### Brand Switches:

Sometimes it is important that patients receive a particular brand of a medicine. For example, the drug lithium should be prescribed by brand, either as Priadel, Camcolit or Liskonum. If such medicines are prescribed by the generic name we will try to switch to the brand.

Occasionally it may be cheaper to prescribe a specific brand of medicine rather than using the generic name.

### Class switches:

There may be several different drugs in the same group of medicines. When there is no difference in how effective the different drugs are, the cheapest drug in the group should be used. For example, we now use amlodipine instead of felodipine for the treatment of angina or hypertension (high blood pressure).

### Isomers:

Sometimes a particular drug is available as a slightly different chemical form (called an "isomer"). Usually there is no advantage with using the isomer although it may be considerably more expensive.

### Dose Changes:

Sometimes a low strength of a medicine is prescribed twice a day. It is often just as effective, more convenient and less expensive to prescribe a higher strength once daily.

### Tablets and Capsules:

Sometimes the same medicine may be available as both tablets and capsules. If there is a difference in cost, we will recommend that the less expensive product is prescribed.