**Prescriptions - Don't use it? Don't order it**



Up to £18m is lost every year in Northern Ireland through wasted prescriptions. The information below will help you to make sure that you are not wasting any medicine unnecessarily. Remember – if you don’t use it, don’t order it.

**What is wasted medicine?**

It is a medicine that is dispensed, normally from your pharmacy, but never used.

**Why does it matter if medicine is wasted?**

If you do not take your medicine as prescribed, then:

* it is possible that your condition may not improve, or even get worse – you may even need further treatments or hospitalisation
* the Health Service will still have to pay for the cost of the medicine – money that could otherwise have be spent on important treatments and services

**So what should I do?**

Before re-ordering a repeat prescription, check that you are still regularly taking all the medicines on the prescription. Only order those medicines that you are regularly taking.

If you have any doubts or concerns about your supply of medicine, you should speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

**Can I order medicine ‘just in case’ I might use it?**

You should discuss any medicines that may be needed ‘just in case’ with your doctor or pharmacist. Such medicines should not be re-ordered each time a repeat prescription is ordered, but only when your existing supply is finished.

**Will I still be able to order a medicine in the future if I tell my GP I don’t need it now?**

Yes. You should inform your GP practice or pharmacy that the medicine is not needed ‘this time’. If this happens, the medicine will not be removed from your prescription record, so you can still order it when you do need it.

**What do I do if I have medicine left after I have stopped taking it?**

There are many reasons for medicines being left over. It may be that:

* you have recovered
* a medicine is changed because of its side effects
* a doctor has reviewed your condition and has decided to stop one medicine and start another

Your doctor or pharmacist will provide you with advice about what you should do with medicines left over.

Remember, you should always take your medicine as directed.

**How should I dispose of medicine I no longer need?**

You should return any medicines that you no longer use to your community pharmacy where they will be disposed of safely.

**I am a carer. Where can I get advice on the medicines that I am assisting a patient or relative with?**

The pharmacist who dispensed the medicines is a good source of information and will provide you with appropriate advice