

# Unlicensed medicines

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet is being provided to help answer some of the questions you or those who care for you may have about your medication. It is not meant to replace the consultation between you and your medical team, but aims to help you understand more about the treatments you discussed together.

You are being given this leaflet because a medicine you have been prescribed is not currently licensed in the UK.

### Licensed medicines

To ensure medicines in the UK are safe and effective, they have to conform to strict standards set by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). When a medicine meets all the requirements and passes clinical trials it is given what is called a marketing authorisation (this used to be called a product licence). This means it can be legitimately used to treat particular medical conditions.

### Unlicensed medicines

Sometimes your medical team will recommend you to take a medicine that is not currently licensed in the UK if they think the medicine is likely to be effective and the benefits outweigh any associated risk. The medicine may be unlicensed because:

- it does not have UK marketing authorisation, e.g. it may not be licensed in a formulation that you need
- no companies sell the medicine in the UK or it is not classified as a medicine
- it is still going through clinical trials

### Prescribing an unlicensed medicine

Your medical team will look at all the medical evidence available before prescribing an unlicensed medicine.

All medicines may have side effects. In the UK, all manufacturers must include an information leaflet which explains the effects of the medicine. If the medicine your medical team have given you is unlicensed, the leaflet may not be relevant to your condition or may not be written in English. They may then provide you with another leaflet or information sheet.

Always take your medicines as instructed on the label. If you have any concerns, talk to your medical team or pharmacist.

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## Refusing an unlicensed medicine

If your medical team prescribe an unlicensed medicine, it is because they are choosing a particular treatment for you and this may be your best option. All the medical evidence will have been carefully considered. However, if you are not happy, you should discuss your options with your medical team or pharmacist. With some unlicensed medicines you are required to give your consent in writing before you can start taking them. If you do agree in writing, you can change your mind any time afterwards.

## Finding out more about my unlicensed medicine

If the leaflet that comes with your medicine does not have information about your condition, ask your medical team or pharmacist. If the information is in another language, an English translation will be provided if available. If there is no suitable leaflet relevant to your condition your medical team or pharmacist may put some information together for you. You could also ask them for support groups and websites about your particular condition so you can find out more information.

## Renewing your prescription with your GP

Usually the hospital will prescribe your unlicensed medicine(s) and make sure you have a regular supply. If you do not know how to renew your prescription, check whether the hospital pharmacy will set up a regular repeat prescription for you, and make sure you have enough medication until your next visit.

## Useful contact details

- Medicines helpline (Monday to Friday, 09.00 to 17.00), telephone: **020 3311 1703**
- NHS 111: Call 111 or visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- Speak to your care team if you have any more questions

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net). The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf. Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in **writing** to: Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY.

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille, or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: [imperial.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.patient.information@nhs.net)

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)