

Learn More about your Medicines

The length of time medicines stay safe and effective varies greatly. Ensure that you note the expiry date, which should not be exceeded.

If there are children living in or visiting the house, you should store medicines out of their sight and reach.

are there any specific safety issues relating to my pain patch that I should consider?

Yes there are – there have been reports of patches accidentally sticking to the skin of people (including children) for whom they are not prescribed.

To minimise this, when you remove your patch, or someone else does, ensure the patch sides are folded inwards with the sticky part on the inside.

what should I do with unwanted medicines?

If you have medication at home which you are no longer prescribed or which has passed its expiry date, you should take it to your local pharmacy where it will be destroyed.

Further information about your medicines can be found in the relevant patient information leaflets supplied with the medicines.

further advice

- For advice you can call the Pharmacy medicines helpline at Frimley Park Hospital on 0300 613 4744 (weekdays 9am-5.15pm).
- Alternatively ask your pharmacist at your local chemist.
- Your Phyllis Tuckwell doctor or registered nurse may be able to help with any other questions you may have.

Large print version available on request.

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information about your medicines

Generally medicines prescribed by your Doctor or bought over the counter from a Pharmacist are licensed for use by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

The licence (or marketing authorisation) specifies the conditions and patient groups for which the medicine should be used, and how it should be given.

Patient Information Leaflets supplied with medicines reflect the licensed uses. When a medicine is used beyond its licence, the information in the Patient Information Leaflet may not be relevant to your circumstances.

In palliative care, medicines are commonly used for conditions or in ways that are not specified on the licence. Your Doctor will use medicines beyond the licence only when there is research and experience to back up such use.

This use of medicines outside of licence is common and accepted practice in palliative care.

If you have any questions, please ask your Doctor, Nurse or Pharmacist for more information.

which drugs are used for reasons outside their licence (off-label)?

Examples of medicines used very successfully beyond the licence include:

Amitriptyline - an anti-depressant which may be used in low doses for nerve pain.

Morphine oral solution - usually used to treat pain but may be given at a low dosage to help breathlessness.

Lorazepam - a medicine usually given for anxiety but may also be used to treat breathlessness.

Dexamethasone - a steroid drug used to reduce inflammation but can be used in low doses to help your appetite. If you are taking dexamethasone it is important that you read the leaflet with your tablets and that you carry a steroid card with you at all times.

Also, instead of injecting into a vein or muscle, medicines are often given subcutaneously (under the skin) because this is more comfortable and convenient. If you would like more information please ask your Doctor or Pharmacist.

can I drive when I am taking medicines?

It is illegal in England and Wales to drive with prescription or over-the-counter medicines in your body if it impairs your driving, or you have over the specified limits of these drugs in your blood which have not been prescribed for you.

These drugs include medicines such as methadone, morphine or opiate (or opioid-based) drugs like fentanyl, codeine or tramadol. Also drugs like diazepam,

clonazepam, lorazepam and temazepam. Some of these medications are commonly used in palliative care, so you may be taking one or more of them.

You can drive after taking these drugs if:

- you **have been prescribed them** and followed advice on how to take them by a healthcare professional
- they are **not causing you to be unfit to drive**.

We advise that you **do not drive** while taking your medicine, until you know how it affects you. **Do not drive** if you feel drowsy, dizzy, unable to concentrate or make decisions, or if you have blurred or double vision.

We would also advise that you keep a copy of your prescription in the vehicle with you.

To find out if your medicine may impair your driving, and therefore whether you can drive, read the warning label on the box or bottle, and the patient information leaflet supplied with the medicine, or talk to your doctor, Pharmacist or healthcare professional.

how should I store my medicines?

Medicines come in different forms, e.g. tablets, capsules, liquids, cream or drops. The majority of medicines should be stored in a cool dry place. Some medicines will need to be stored in the fridge; this will be clearly stated on the label.

Always keep medicines in their original container.