

## Medication

### Where to find Medicine information

Your doctor or GP should explain what medicine they are prescribing to you, what effect the medication will have on you and your treatment, and where you can get a prescription. Most medications should have a 'patient information leaflet' (PIL) inside the packaging or box. This leaflet must give you information on:

- **Identification of the medicine:** the name, form of medicine (tablet, cream, liquid) and strength of the medicine.
- **Therapeutic indications:** the health conditions the medicine is prescribed for
- **Necessary Information:** if the medicine interacts with other medicines, foods or drinks, effects on driving, pregnant or nursing mothers and any other situations.
- **Dosage:** how often you should take the medicine, how long for and how to take it
- **Possible side effects:** a list of side effects and what to do if they happen
- **Additional information:** how the medicine should be stored, any non-medicinal ingredients, the details of the producer of the medicine

### Taking medicine correctly

Your medicine should have instructions for taking it on a label, the packaging box or bottle. Always follow these instructions and never take more than the dose in the instructions.

You should always check if:

- it should be taken with water or after food
- if it shouldn't be taken with certain drinks, for example some medications can't be taken with milk or grapefruit juice
- if it shouldn't be taken after food, for example some medications upset the stomach lining
- if herbal or complementary medicines affect the medication
- you miss a dose, what is the

### Medication reminders and prompts

If you are taking different medications at different times of the day then you may need reminders when and how to take your medication. People who have memory problems, some mental health conditions, visual impairments as well as other health conditions may need support with prompts and reminders to take medication.

- medication reminder charts or calendars
- medication planner and reminder apps
- alarms or voice reminders from a phone, watch, smart speaker device or alarm clock.
- phone calls or video calls from a family, friend or carer
- dosette boxes or Multi-compartment compliance aids. These boxes put medication doses into days of the week. Pharmacies may not provide these and you should check with your pharmacy if they will supply medication in dosette boxes.

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## Who can I talk to about medication

If you or someone you know has questions about medication, think Pharmacy first. The best place to seek advice is your [community pharmacy](#).. They can also tell your doctor or GP about any medication issues or concerns. Many community pharmacies have a quiet room where you can talk to a pharmacist in private. Read [more about Pharmacies and chemists](#)

If you want to speak to someone about your medication out of hours, but its not an emergency you can call NHS [111](#)

If there is an emergency because of your medication such as having a severe allergic reaction then call [999](#)

If you are a patient or a healthcare professional that has been given medication from a Newcastle Hospitals Trust hospital you can contact the [Medicines Information Patient Helpline](#)

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## Reviewing your medication

If you are taking prescribed medication your doctor should check them regularly. This is known as a medication review. A Healthcare professional will review the medicine, how it is given to you as a medication, your health, and any side effects to make sure the medicines you're taking are right for you.

## Paying for medication

You should make sure you are getting the [benefits](#) you are entitled to as you may be able to get your prescriptions free. Read more about [welfare benefits](#)

[NHS prescription prepayment certificates](#) can save you money if you pay for prescriptions regularly. There's no limit on the number of prescriptions you can have with a certificate. You can pay in advance for a certificate for 3 or 12 months.

You may be able to get help with NHS costs through the [NHS Low Income Scheme \(LIS\)](#) If you are not receiving a means tested benefit, but have a low income of £16,000 or under or £23,500 if living permanently in a care home.

Read more [about help with health costs](#)

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## Medication Side Effects

Some medicines can make you dizzy and can increase your risk of a [fall](#). This might mean you are not able to do any physical activities, work, drive a vehicle or use machinery. You should not drink alcohol with many medicines, as it can make you dizzy, cause headaches, make you sleepy and increase the effects of some medications.

If you experience any side effects not listed in the Patient Information Leaflet, you can register them with [the Yellow Card Scheme](#). This is run by the [Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency \(MHRA\)](#) to check the safety of medicines. The Yellow Card Scheme also allows you to report any problems with medical devices

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## Storing Medicines safely

Medicines in your home should be:

- kept in one place at home away from other items that could be mistaken for medicines.
- kept in a locked cupboard or drawer if there are children in the house or a vulnerable adult
- kept in the packaging they came in. If this isn't possible the packaging, dose instructions and information leaflet should be kept somewhere safe.
- returned to the pharmacy to safely dispose of if it is unused, unwanted or you are changing medication. Do not keep them, put them in the rubbish bin or flush down the toilet.

Medicines in care settings such as a care home should be:

- stored in cupboards or closed storage units that are locked when not being used.
- in a lockable medicine only fridge for medicines that need to be kept at a lower temperature
- easy to access but stored safely in a secure place (for example a lockable drawer or desk) in a residents room, if they are managing their own medication.
- only available to care staff who have been approved to have keys and access to medicines.
- stored separately when needed. Tablets, capsules and liquids should be stored separately to creams, ointments and suppositories.

The [Message in a Bottle scheme](#) helps you store your personal and medical information, or if you are a carer, the person you care for, so it can be found quickly by emergency services. This includes current medications, where they are kept, repeat prescriptions and any medication allergies. You are given a small bottle to keep in the fridge and stickers to put in your home to make emergency services aware.

Read more [about the Bottle in the fridge scheme here](#)

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## Medication emergencies

### Under-dosing

you may notice someone is taking a low dose of their medication if:

- Their expected symptoms get worse quickly
- You find unused medication

## Refusing medication

Never give medicine to someone who won't take it, everyone has the right to refuse medicine. Talk to them about why they don't want to take it. It could be

- fear
- worry about prescription costs,
- taste, smell, colour or texture of the medicine
- Side effects

Sometimes it can be more difficult to understand why they are refusing medication. If someone has a communication issue because of dementia, cognitive impairment, physical disability, mental health condition or learning disability.

You can also talk to their GP or pharmacist about other forms of medication such as liquid or skin patches.

## Over-dosing

You may notice someone has taken too much medication or you may only see symptoms of an overdose such as :

- seizures (fits)
- breathing difficulties
- dizziness and drowsiness
- Vomiting (being sick)
- Agitation and heart palpitations

If they don't seem to be seriously ill call NHS 111 for help and advice. If they seem to be seriously ill, call 999.

If they are conscious ask them to sit still and stay with them until emergency services arrive. If they appear to be unconscious, try to wake them and encourage them to spit out any medication left in their mouth. If they aren't breathing or their heart has stopped perform CPR if you know how.

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## Help with prescriptions or taking medication

Some pharmacies will deliver your prescription to you if you are housebound. Ask your pharmacist if they can do this and whether or not there will be a charge.

You can order, manage and track your NHS prescriptions using the [NHS App](#).

If you cannot get a prescription delivered and need help there are also community services that can help such as [home from hospital](#), [good gym](#)

Read more about [Help with shopping and prescriptions](#)

You may need more help with taking medication if you live alone or if you have a health condition.

**[Speak to Adult Social Care at Newcastle City Council](#)**. They will talk to you to find out how are you managing at home. They give information and support adults in Newcastle who find day to day activities difficult.

**[Telecare and telehealth](#)** can help you to stay living independently at home for longer. You can use devices to manage your own health (self care) and remind you to do things like take medication.

For example an **Automated pill dispenser** can store medication and open it only when it is time to take it. It can give visual or audio reminders to take medication and if the medicine is not taken it can alert telecare staff to call you.

**[Ostara \(formerly Community Care Alarm Service\)](#)** provide telecare and alarm equipment for Newcastle city council.

You may be able to get help with taking medication from [homecare services](#) that have been arranged by Adult social care or you have arranged and paid for yourself.

Read more about [Home care services in Newcastle](#)

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## Accessing your medical records

You, or a named representative, have a right to access your health records under the [Data Protection Act 2018](#). If you want to read your health records, you can ask to do this at your GP surgery and can arrange a time to go in and read them. You don't have to give a reason for wanting to see your records.

You can see your prescriptions electronically in the [NHS App](#), allowing you to view medicine details and Use the app barcode to collect them without paper prescriptions. You can also access digital copies of your health records using the NHS app.

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## Resources

[Choice and Medication.org](#) offer information about treatments for mental health conditions to help you make informed decisions about choosing the right medicine.

[YoungMinds](#) have a [Information leaflet for young people about Mental Health Medication](#)

[The Care Quality Commission \(CQC\)](#) offer [guidance on storing medicines in care homes](#)

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society have [a leaflet for healthcare professionals on helping patients to make the most of medicines](#)

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## Useful Organisations

**NHS 111**

**Website:** [www.nhs.uk/111](http://www.nhs.uk/111)

## Home from Hospital and Community Support

**Email:** nuth.homefromhospital@nhs.net

**Website:** <https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/opportunity/community-responder-newcastle/>

**Telephone:** 07534 043578

**Address:** Grainger Hub, NE1 5JE

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## Related Articles

[Pharmacy \(or Chemists\)](#)

[Your Doctor or GP](#)

[Telecare, telehealth and personal alarm systems](#)

[Home care agencies in Newcastle](#)