Contact Us

This information has been written by the specialist mental health pharmacists who work for the Trust.

If you would like to contact us, ask your ward or team to put you in touch with the pharmacist in your area.

www.awp.nhs.uk

To make a comment or suggestion, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust’s Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Tel: 01249 468261
Freephone: 0800 073 1778
Email pals@awp.nhs.uk

This information can be made available in other formats (for example, Braille) or languages on request by calling the PALS number.

Practical information about your medicines

How to obtain, store and remember to take your medication

This leaflet gives some hints and tips about the practical aspects of using medication.

If you want to know more about a specific medicine or condition, other information is available, ask a member of your mental health team.

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Travelling with medicines

If you take regular medicines and you are going abroad try to think ahead. Ideally start planning at least two months before you leave. You may need to arrange an extra supply of your medicines so you have enough to take with you. It is useful to take a letter from your doctor, or mental health team, listing the medicines you are taking with you and why. Carry medicines in your hand luggage (remember restrictions on liquids and get advice from your airline if necessary) Certain medicines (called “controlled drugs” such as methadone and morphine) have extra restrictions. Get advice from your prescriber well before you intend to travel. You can find out more on the NHS Choices website: www.nhs.uk (type “medication abroad” into the search box) There are articles on taking medicines abroad, taking medicines on an aeroplane and more information about controlled drugs.

Further information

We hope this information has been helpful. If you have a question that has not been answered here, there are other sources of information available:

- your prescriber
- your mental health team
- your GP surgery
- your community pharmacy
- The patient information leaflet (PIL) that came with your medicine. If there wasn’t one in the box you can find a copy online for most medicines at www.emc.medicines.org.uk
- the NHS Choices website www.nhs.uk
- the Directgov website (information about public services from the government) www.direct.gov.uk
Prescription charges
Unless you are exempt from charges for a specific reason, you have to pay a fee for every item on a green NHS FP10 prescription. This money does not go to the pharmacy, it is a government charge. Mental health conditions are not currently on the list of reasons allowing people to get free prescriptions.

Free prescriptions
There are lots of different groups of people who can get free prescriptions, for example: those over 60 or under 16, people on certain benefits and those with certain medical conditions. Your community pharmacy can give you more information about who doesn’t have to pay charges.

When you sign the back of your prescription to declare that you do not have to pay a prescription charge, the pharmacy staff may ask you for evidence. The pharmacy has to mark the prescription if they have not seen evidence to prove you are exempt (they will still dispense the prescription). The NHS may carry out checks on those claiming free prescriptions. People found to have wrongly claimed help from the NHS with the cost of their prescriptions could face a penalty charge or in some cases prosecution.

You can find out more about prescription charges online: www.direct.gov.uk (type “health costs” into the search box) or by telephoning 0845 850 1166 or by speaking to your community pharmacist.

Season tickets
If you have to pay for prescriptions and are prescribed more than 3 items in 3 months or 14 items in 12 months it may be cheaper to buy a pre-payment certificate or “season ticket”. Your community pharmacy can give you more information or you can call 0845 850 0030.

Why is practical information important?
No medicine will work unless you are able to take it when you need it. We hope the information in this leaflet will help you solve some of the practical problems relating to medicines. It also contains some tips on using medicines safely and effectively.

Ways of obtaining your medication
Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP) is a large organisation. There are lots of different routes for obtaining medicines. Things do vary from area to area so if you feel unsure about how your medicines will be supplied ask your local team for advice.

- An AWP prescriber might give you a green prescription (called an FP10) which can be dispensed by any high street pharmacy.
- Your AWP team may write to your GP and ask them to give you a green FP10 prescription.
- If you have spent time on an inpatient ward you usually receive at least one week’s supply of medication when you leave. Before you go home, someone should explain what medicines you have been prescribed. You will also be told how to get the next supply of your medicines.
- In some circumstances medicines may be provided by your community mental health team. You may collect them from the team base or they may be delivered to you.

Support from your high street pharmacy
High street (or community) pharmacies offer various different services to help you manage your medicines. They can do this most effectively if you use the same pharmacy regularly. There are some examples of services they may offer over the page.
• Collection of your regular prescription from the surgery.
• Filling a weekly pill organiser e.g. a Dosette box.
• Providing information about your medicines.

**Storing medicines**

Most medicines should be stored in a cool dark place, away from direct heat or light. Do not keep medicines in the bathroom or kitchen (even in a cabinet) as they can become too warm and damp.

Always check the label, some medicines need to be stored in the fridge. Others have short expiry dates.

Keep medicines well out of the reach of children. A medicines cabinet that can be locked is ideal.

Medicines are best kept in their original container. This is so you can see what the medicine is, how to take it, any extra instructions and the expiry date.

Don’t use medicines after their expiry date. If you have medicines you don’t need, take them to your pharmacy and they will dispose of them safely.

**Taking medicines**

There are a few general points that apply to all medicines, we have listed some of the most common ones below.

• Check if you can drink alcohol while taking your medicines. It can be very harmful to mix certain medicines with alcohol. In other cases, a small amount of alcohol might be okay. Be particularly careful if you drive or operate heavy machinery. Alcohol combined with medicines can cause severe drowsiness. Ask if you need specific advice.

• Check if there are any foods that you should avoid while taking your medicines.

• Read the label and patient information leaflet for your medicine carefully and always follow the instructions. If you don’t understand how to take your medicines, ask for help.

• Don’t take anyone else’s medicines, or let anyone else take your medicines, even if their symptoms seem similar to yours.

• If you are pregnant, or trying to become pregnant, talk to your GP or mental health team. It may be best to adjust your medicines to make things as safe as possible for your baby.

• If you want to make changes to the medicines you are taking, talk to your prescriber or mental health team first.

**Remembering to take your medicines**

Almost all medicines work best if you take them regularly. Sometimes it can be difficult to remember to take a medicine every day but there are things you can do to help.

• Find a convenient time in your daily routine to take your medicine and try and stick to it. Remember some medicines are best taken at certain times of the day so check the label or ask for advice if you are not sure.

• Use technology to help you, for example: set a reminder on your mobile phone calendar.

• Use a paper and pen reminder system, for example: mark off on a calendar or diary when you have taken your medicine.

• Make a reminder chart, or list, to keep somewhere you will see it telling when to take your medicines.

• Find out if your medicines can be packed into a weekly compliance aid or pill organiser. Your community pharmacy may be able to do this for you (although some pharmacies do charge for the service) Please note not all medicines can be repackaged in this way.