

Background

Medicines are an essential part of health services and are the most common treatment provided in the NHS. They cost the NHS around £11 billion a year. This means that, second to staff costs, medicines are the biggest single cost in the NHS.

Sometimes it is necessary for changes to be made to the medications that patients are prescribed; this may be because new, more effective drugs become available, for safety reasons or as the result of new information or medical study.

Your care will not be compromised and any problem with any change in medication will always be dealt with promptly.



Contact details

For further information, please contact your local Medicines Management Team or you can speak to a member of the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), contact details below:

Medicines Management Team:

Tel: 01480 387126

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

NHS Cambridgeshire
Lockton House
Clarendon Road
Cambridge
CB2 8FH

Tel: 01223 725588
Freephone 0800 279 2535
Email c-pct.PALS@nhs.net



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Is your medication being changed?



Why is my medication being switched?

When a doctor decides to prescribe for a patient he/she needs to decide which drug or medication to give to a patient, this is because there are generally a range of medicines available to treat a given condition.

The prescriber will have several options to choose from and where there is no clinical or individual patient reason that points to the use of one medicine above another, the one that represents the best value for money will usually be tried first.

Prices may change to such an extent that your GP may review the medication that is prescribed for you and 'switch' you to a different medication.

It is not always cost that determines the medication that is prescribed; sometimes clinical trials provide new evidence and this results in the medication you take being reviewed, and again you maybe 'switched' to a different medication.

How might my medication be changed?

» **Generic Switch**

The reason why one drug often becomes the best value for money is usually because the manufacturers patent expires. This means other companies can produce the drug. This is the same as the branded version, containing the same active ingredient(s) at the same strength.

» **To a different medicine**

There may be several different drugs in the same group of medicines. When there is no difference in how effective the different drugs are, the most cost effective (cheapest) drug in the group is usually prescribed.

» **To a branded medicine**

Occasionally it may be better value for the NHS (cheaper) to prescribe a specific brand of medicine rather than using the generic name.

Questions & Answers

» **If my medicine is switched to an equivalent will it work as well?**

YES – Changes are only made where there is lots of good evidence that the alternative medicine works just as well as your current medicine.

» **Will it be as safe?**

YES – The alternative medicines have been fully tested and have been used by other patients already.

» **Can I go back to my old medicine if I have my medicine switched and it does not suit me?**

YES – If you feel the new medication does not suit you, discuss this with your doctor who can decide if changing you back to your old medicine is the best thing to do.

» **Do I have to have my medicines switched even if I don't want to?**

Your doctor will discuss any concerns you have regarding switching but will not make you change if you don't want to, although she/he will talk to you about it before you decide.