

'Only order what you need' communications toolkit

Context

The number of medicines prescribed in the NHS is rising, and so is the amount of medicines that go to waste. It is estimated that £300 million of medicines go unused every year in the UK.

Evidence suggests that several key patient beliefs, such as feeling they must order all at once, as well as system issues, contribute to unnecessary medicine ordering.

This March, NHS London and London's five ICBs are teaming up to launch a campaign to help the public only order the medicines they need - and reduce waste.

The focus is on people in London aged 60-79 who are on two or more repeat prescriptions, and/or their carers. There will also be an uplift in activity aimed at Asian (Bangladeshi and Pakistani) and Black/Mixed communities. This is because:

- repeat prescriptions make up 75% of all items dispensed
- repeat prescriptions are highest in these age and ethnic groups.

We will also be supported from general practice and pharmacy teams.

Paid advertising will run across YouTube, Facebook, Gold Radio London and at targeted bus stops. We will also place advertorials in community ethnic media and local publications.

How to support

From 2 March, we'd love your support with this campaign. You can do this by:

- Sharing our key messages with your audiences and any content you see on [NHS London's Facebook page](#).
- Using our [resources](#) in the community.
- Let us know if you need any campaign materials that are not already provided. Please contact: frances.adlam@selondonics.nhs.uk

Key messages

- Before you order your repeat prescription please check how much medicine you have left at home.
- If you still have some of your medicines, only order those you need more of. You can re-order the others next time.

- Only ordering what you need:
 - is safer for you, as medicines can go out of date if kept for too long.
 - helps prevent medicine shortages, making medicines available for everyone.
 - helps reduce waste and is better for the environment. If you do have any unused medicines at home, you can return them to your local pharmacy for safe disposal.
- Not using some of your medicines? Speak to your GP practice about a medication review; they can help make sure your prescription is right for you.
- Check your prescription bag before you leave the pharmacy in case it contains medicines you don't need. Returning these medicines means they can be used by another patient.
- Only order what you need to cut waste, prevent shortages, and keep medicines available for everyone.

Bulletin copy

New NHS campaign to reduce medicine waste in London

This March, NHS London and London's five ICBs are teaming up to launch a campaign to help the public only order the medicines they need and reduce waste. Nationally it's estimated that unused medicines cost the NHS £300 million every year. Please help support the campaign by promoting our key messages and [resources](#) across your channels.

Web copy

New NHS campaign to reduce medicine waste in London

NHS [insert region] has teamed up with the other NHS integrated care boards across the capital to launch a new campaign to help people only order the medicines they need and reduce waste.

Nationally, it is estimated unused medicines cost the NHS £300 million each year – money that could be used to provide other NHS care.

Many people feel they must order every medicine on their repeat prescription, even when they still have some left at home.

Patients are encouraged to check what they have at home first, as only ordering what you need:

- helps keep you safe, as medicines can go out of date
- helps prevent shortages, so medicines are available for everyone
- reduces waste and protects the environment

You can take any unused medicines to your local pharmacy for safe disposal.

Local spokesperson: “Checking what you have at home before you order more is a simple step that helps you stay well. It also helps make sure medicines are there for others who need them. If you have medicines on your repeat prescription that you no longer use, ask your GP practice for a medicines review. They’ll help make sure your prescription is right for you.”

GP practices, pharmacies and community groups will be sharing tips and support throughout the campaign. For more information speak with your local pharmacy.

Blog

Repeat prescriptions? Only order what you need.

If you take regular medicines, you’ll know how easy it is to tick “re-order” on your repeat prescription. But before you do this, it’s worth having a quick look at what you already have at home. If you still have enough medicine to get you through, you don’t need to order more just yet.

Only ordering what you need helps keep you safe. Having lots of extra medicines at home increases the chance they’ll go out of date, meaning they may no longer work as they should.

If you’ve stopped taking a medicine or aren’t sure you still need it, ask your GP practice for a medication review. This review is to make sure everything on your prescription is right for you.

It might feel like a small thing, but it genuinely makes a big difference. Across the NHS, unused medicines cost around £300 million every year. Ordering only what you need helps reduce this waste and helps prevent shortages for others who rely on the same medicines.

A quick check before you re-order is all it takes. When it comes to repeat prescriptions, only order what you need.

Templates available on Canva. Please contact: frances.adlam@selondonics.nhs.uk for access.

Resources

Download assets [here](#).