

Patient information: pharmacy service

Unlicensed medicines FAQ's

This leaflet is for patients who have been prescribed an unlicensed medicine and answers frequently asked questions some people may have. Please speak to the pharmacist if you have any further questions after reading this leaflet.

I have been prescribed an unlicensed medicine. What does this mean?

You have been prescribed an unlicensed medicine as there is no licensed alternative that will meet your needs. There are several reasons for prescribing an unlicensed medicine. For example, it could be that you are allergic to the licensed medicine, that it is not available in the UK or it has been withdrawn from the market. Your doctor will have thought very carefully about prescribing the most appropriate medicine for you.

What is the difference between licensed and unlicensed medicines?

To sell a medicine in the UK, the manufacturer must apply for a product licence from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The MHRA will only agree a product licence if:

- tests have proved that the medicine successfully treats the

condition for which it was developed.

- the medicine does not have too many side effects.
- the medicine is made to a high standard.
- the licence will be for the medical condition(s) for which it was developed.

An unlicensed medicine is one that does not have a product licence. The reasons for this are:

- if only a very small number of people would use a medicine, there might be little commercial interest in marketing that medicine.
- the medicine might be waiting for approval from the MHRA.
- your doctor might prescribe your medicine in a form that is not readily available, so that it has to be made up as a special preparation by your local pharmacy.

Below are some examples of when an unlicensed medicine may be used:

- your doctor might believe that a medicine would work well for your condition, even though it has not been licensed for that condition.

- Moorfields Eye Hospital**
NHS Foundation Trust
City Road, London EC1V 2PD
Phone: 020 7253 3411
www.moorfields.nhs.uk

Moorfields Direct telephone helpline
Phone: 020 7566 2345

Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm
Saturday, 9am-5pm
Information and advice on eye
conditions and treatments from
experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

Phone: 020 7566 2324 / 020 7566 2325
Email: moorfields.pals@nhs.net
Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

Your right to treatment within 18 weeks

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right, but if you feel that we have failed to do so, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) who will be able to advise you further (see above). For more information about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs

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