

Managing Pain Safely New Local Pharmacy Project Important Info for YOU

A Pilot Service is available, from some Community Pharmacies located in the **East Antrim area, to help people safely manage their use of over-the-counter (OTC) pain relief medicine containing codeine.** The service is available to anyone aged over 18 years old, who presents to a participating pharmacy requesting to buy OTC codeine products, including those who are:

- Identified by the Pharmacy as needing advice or support with their use of OTC codeine products **OR**
- Seeking advice or support for better use of OTC codeine products

The use of codeine can cause side-effects, such as constipation, headaches, and dependence. This dependence on codeine can happen quickly. We can build up a tolerance to these medications, meaning that we require more of them over time, to achieve the same benefit/results. **This reliance can happen without us even noticing it.**

Other side-effects: OTC codeine combination products can contain other medications, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Some people may feel the need to use higher than the recommended dose limits to achieve an effect from codeine, but do not realise that they are actually overdosing on paracetamol or ibuprofen. This can be very dangerous, and can cause damage to the **gastrointestinal system, our livers, or our kidneys.**

Steps in this service

1. Initial discussion

Pharmacy staff will ask you a number of questions following a request for an OTC codeine product to find out more about your condition, including the reason for your request. This is standard practice, in the Community Pharmacy setting, to ensure the medication is appropriate for your needs and safe to take based on your medical history.

2. Risk Assessment and Brief Intervention

If you request, or are identified by the pharmacy as needing advice/support on the use of OTC codeine, you will be offered a further assessment by the pharmacist. The Pharmacist will discuss your use of OTC codeine including reasons for taking it, how much you take and for how long, as well as any unpleasant effects you might be experiencing and you will receive a score relating to your risk of codeine dependence. The Pharmacist will then provide you with additional advice on options for further support, based on your answers/score.

They may also direct you to other available healthcare services such as Links Counselling Service, or offer you a referral to the Northern Trust Community Addiction Service (CAS).

3. Referral to the Community Addiction Service

The Pharmacist may offer you this if:

- You are identified as being at increased risk of codeine dependence (a score of 2 or more) **OR**
- Your usage of OTC codeine products is in excess of what is recommended.

You cannot be referred to the Northern Trust CAS unless you agree to this. Your personal information (name, address, date of birth, and contact details) will only be shared, as part of the referral, if you give your consent. If you do NOT wish to be referred, the pharmacist can still give you some brief advice and leaflets/resources to read later, or other options for support.

If you are referred to the Northern Trust CAS by the Community Pharmacy, the Northern Trust CAS may think that further support from Links Counselling Service would be better for you. The Community Pharmacy will contact you to tell you how to get in touch with the Links Counselling Service.

4. Evaluation

You will be asked to complete a short, written feedback questionnaire on your experience of this trial support service. The questionnaire is anonymous and does not include your details. You will not be contacted after completing the questionnaire. All of this project feedback will be shared with the Public Health Agency to help make the service better for future service users and carers, where appropriate.