

Information for patients: Shared Care Agreements for Medicines

We would be grateful if you would take time to read this information as it will help us work with you to manage your condition and ensure effective and safe treatment.

What is a Shared Care Agreement?

A Shared Care Agreement is an agreement between you, your GP, and your hospital consultant. It enables the care and treatment you receive for a specific health condition to be shared between the hospital and your GP. **Shared care agreement will only occur when your condition is stable or predictable.**

A Shared Care Agreement contains information about your medicine, guidance on prescribing and monitoring and the responsibilities of your consultant (in the hospital), your GP and you. For a Shared Care Agreement to work effectively, everyone involved must understand and follow it and communicate effectively.

The agreement means that the medicine the hospital has started, can be continued by your GP, so you won't have to visit the hospital to collect your medicine. Your consultant, you and your GP will need to sign the Shared Care Agreement to indicate agreement to managing your care in this way and the included responsibilities.

How does shared care work?

In cooperation with you, your consultant and GP share responsibility for your care and treatment.

The consultant is a specialist in the condition for which you are being treated and with your agreement, will start prescribing a medicine, making sure it is suitable for you. The specialist will arrange for appropriate monitoring, including blood tests, to be undertaken.

Your consultant will discuss a Shared Care Agreement with you including your part in it and the need for ongoing review and monitoring. Once you and your consultant have agreed to shared care, your consultant will contact your GP. Once your GP has agreed to the Shared Care Agreement, the GP will be able to prescribe the same medicine for you at the dose recommended by the consultant and ensure relevant ongoing monitoring takes place.

The General Medical Council, which regulates GPs, says that 'when a GP prescribes a medicine, the GP needs to satisfy themselves that the prescription is needed, appropriate for the patient and within the limits of their competence'.

So, your GP can only issue a prescription if the consultant and you keep to the responsibilities you have agreed (see below). If responsibilities are not kept, or if the GP no longer feels it is safe to prescribe the medicine, he/she will explain the reasons to you and your consultant, and prescribing responsibilities will be transferred back to the hospital who will review if the medication is still suitable for you.

What do I need to do to ensure the Shared Care Agreement can continue?

- Attend hospital outpatient appointments: You must still attend the hospital for regular reviews of your condition as directed by your consultant (these may be less frequent than before and you may be seen by a specialist pharmacist or a specialist nurse). If you do not attend your hospital appointments, your GP will not be able to continue issuing prescriptions for the relevant medicine.
- Attend GP appointments: You must attend any appointments you have with your GP in relation to the shared care medicine, so they can look after you effectively.
- Have monitoring/blood tests as you have been advised to: Your consultant should have informed you if and how often you need to have monitoring, including blood tests. It is vital that you have the required monitoring to ensure that the medicine continues to be safe. You can usually have your blood taken at an appropriate clinic and not need to go to the hospital. If you do not have the monitoring/blood tests as advised by your consultant, your GP or consultant will no longer be able to issue you with prescriptions as it would not be safe to do so.

What do I do if I am having side-effects to the medicine or any other questions regarding this medication?

Your consultant should have informed you of the common side-effects to expect and what to do if you experience them. If you think you may be having side-effects from a medicine, report these directly to the specialist team/consultant. Your specialist team/consultant would be able to answer any other in depth queries about this medication. Your GP may need to seek advice from your consultant before issuing you with another prescription; this is to ensure it is safe for you to continue on the medication.

What if my disease symptoms change or get worse?

Report any changes in disease symptoms to your specialist team/consultant or GP as your treatment may need to be altered.

What about the other medicines I take?

Inform your GP and the consultant of all other medicines you are taking, including those you may have bought yourself. Do not take new medicines (including those you could buy) until you have discussed this with your pharmacist, GP or specialist team/consultant.

What happens if my circumstances change or I change GP Practice?

Alert your GP and/or specialist team/consultant to any changes of circumstances which could affect management of disease eg. plans for pregnancy; plans to move/change GP. If you register at a new GP Practice a new Shared Care Agreement needs to be put in place between your new GP and the specialist team before you move to ensure your supply of medication is not interrupted. The specialist team can start this process if you provide them with information before you move to make sure there is a smooth handover.