

How to get further supplies

Some unlicensed medicines may take longer to obtain than others depending on whether they have to be imported or be made specifically for you. Your pharmacist will tell you if this is the case.

If you need to continue with your medicine after leaving the hospital, your GP will usually continue prescribing it for you. If your GP cannot do this for any reason, or if the pharmacist cannot get hold of the unlicensed medicine, the hospital will continue to supply it for you.

Where can you get more information?

Your pharmacist may have a special information leaflet about your medicine or illness. Please ask. Often there are support groups for people with a particular illness or condition which you can join.

If you are unsure or have any further questions, please contact the doctor or pharmacist looking after you.

Contact details

Medicines Information

Pharmacy Department, Torbay Hospital,
Torquay, TQ2 7AA

☎ 01803 655304

✉ sdhct.medicinesinformation@nhs.net

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Torbay and South Devon
NHS Foundation Trust

PATIENT INFORMATION

Unlicensed Medicines

You have been given an unlicensed medicine. This leaflet will provide you with information about unlicensed medicines, and why they are used.

If you would like more information about your medicine, please speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

What is a medicine's licence?

A licence is proof that a medicine has passed assessment to show that it is safe and effective for treating a particular condition, or range of conditions.

In the UK, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) grants licences for medicines.

Why use unlicensed medicines?

Your doctor has prescribed an unlicensed medicine because no suitable licensed alternative is available to treat your condition. Your doctor will have thought very carefully about prescribing the most appropriate medicine for you.

Your doctor might have prescribed an unlicensed medicine for you if:

- they believe that a medicine would work well for your condition even though it is only licensed for a different one
- the medicine is only available as a tablet/capsule, and you need a liquid to be specially made
- the medicine is not available in the UK and has to be imported
- a medicine is currently undergoing clinical trials, but does not yet have a licence.

If this medicine works, why isn't it licensed?

Medicines can only be licensed for conditions that have been studied in a clinical trial. Conducting trials is slow and expensive and many illnesses have not been studied in this way, but they still need to be treated.

In these situations, doctors and pharmacists can use their medical experience and knowledge to recommend the use of an unlicensed medicine.

Why are so many children's medicines unlicensed?

Before being licensed, medicines must undergo trials in volunteer patients. It is very difficult to conduct trials in children so most medicines are only tested with adults. This means that they do not have a licence for use in children.

It is common for these medicines to be safely used in children, even though it is not within the licence.

All medicines used in children are carefully assessed to make sure they are safe.

What if you do not want to take this medicine?

If you have any concerns about your medicine or treatment, please speak to your doctor or pharmacist. They want to help you to make the right choice and it is important that they understand what your concerns are.

They can discuss other available treatments, why they think this is the best one for you and what options you have if you choose not to take this unlicensed medicine.

What does this mean for you?

There is usually very little difference to taking a licensed medicine.

There may be less information readily available for you about your treatment, and you may have to obtain further supplies from a specific place.

It is important that you always take the medicine as directed on the label. If you have any side effects or concerns, you should discuss them with the doctor looking after you.