

Think Twice When Requesting Paracetamol from your GP

South West Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group currently spend £203,000 each year on all prescribed paracetamol and across Lincolnshire the amount is in excess of £1.2m.

Patients are being asked to reconsider whether they need to request paracetamol 500mg tablets on prescription for short-term conditions such as colds, flu, headaches and other aches and pains. Every home should have a medicines cabinet, adequately stocked with low cost generic treatments that can be used for the short-term relief of common conditions. A box of 16 paracetamol 500mg tablets can cost less than 30p from a supermarket, healthfood store or community pharmacy.

Many people are prescribed regular paracetamol up to a maximum of four times daily to reduce inflammation and provide pain relief for long-term conditions such as arthritis. This is entirely appropriate and it is not the intention to prevent those people from continuing to receive prescriptions for paracetamol on the NHS.

Patients in South West Lincolnshire are being asked not to expect paracetamol to be prescribed for short-term use for minor conditions.

Dr Vindi Bhandal, Chair of NHS South West Lincolnshire CCG said:

“At a time when the NHS is facing huge financial pressures, providing small quantities of these painkillers on prescription is not an effective use of funds.

“Every time a doctor writes a prescription, the NHS incurs additional charges through dispensing and administrative fees – and if GP time is also included the cost rises even higher.

“These painkillers can be bought from a shop or pharmacy for far less than the price the NHS pays when providing them on prescription. For that reason, we’re asking people to make this choice.

“By doing so they will help us save money that we can then invest elsewhere – to ensure money is spent locally providing care for the patients in South West Lincolnshire.

Think twice before asking your GP for Antihistamines

Cetirizine and loratadine are the two most widely prescribed antihistamines for hay fever in Lincolnshire with prescribing costs across the county exceeding £177,000 each year.

South West Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group are asking patients to purchase their own antihistamines rather than asking their GP for a prescription.

At a time when the NHS is facing increasing financial pressure, the continued provision of low cost, commercially available antihistamines on prescription is no longer considered to be an appropriate use of limited NHS funds. Patients suffering from hayfever who currently receive cetirizine or loratadine on prescription are asked to consider purchasing their own supply from a supermarket, community pharmacy or other retailer. Generic versions of both of these products are now available for as little as £1 for 28 tablets.

The main focus for this year's Allergy Awareness campaign is to raise the profile of seasonal allergic rhinitis or 'hayfever'. This is considered to be the most common allergy, with one in four of the UK population suffering with it every year. Each year, the number of allergy sufferers increases by 5% with half of those affected being children.

At this time of year, many people start to be affected by allergies due to larger quantities of airborne grass pollen, suffering from symptoms such as sneezing, runny, blocked or stuffy nose, itchy eyes and post-nasal drip. Some people are allergic to other types of pollen, such as tree or weed pollen, and may be affected at different times of the year.

Dr Vindi Bhandal, Chair of South West Lincolnshire CCG said:

“Every time a doctor writes a prescription, the NHS incurs additional charges through dispensing and administrative fees – and if GP time is also included the cost rises even higher.

“Antihistamines can be bought from a shop or pharmacy for far less than the price the NHS pays when providing them on prescription. For that reason, we're asking people to make this choice.

Anyone who is feeling unwell with the symptoms of hayfever should visit their pharmacist in the first instance who can offer advice on medication that is available over the counter to relieve the symptoms associated with the condition.”