

Information for patients

Shared Care Agreements for Medicines

This leaflet explains what a Share Care Agreement is.

What is a Shared Care Agreement?

A Shared Care Agreement is an agreement between you, your GP practice, 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 practice. This leaflet explains how it can work, in order to manage your condition and ensure effective and safe treatment.

There are two requirements for a Shared Care Agreement to be put in place:

- It can only occur with your agreement
- Your condition must be stable or as expected.

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. The Shared Care Agreement means that when the hospital has started prescribing your medicine, it can be continued by your GP practice, so you won't have to visit the hospital to collect your medicine.

You, your consultant, and your GP will need to sign the Shared Care Agreement. This means you accept managing your care in this way and the associated responsibilities.

How does shared care work?

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 consultant will arrange for appropriate monitoring to be carried out, including blood tests. There will come a point in your treatment when you may not need to be monitored by the consultant as often and this monitoring can be done by your GP practice.

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 practice. Once your GP practice have agreed to the Shared Care Agreement, the GP practice will be able to prescribe the same medicine for you at the dose recommended by the consultant and ensure relevant ongoing monitoring takes place.

Your GP practice 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 practice no longer feels it is safe to prescribe the medicine, he/she will explain the reasons to you and your consultant. Prescribing responsibilities will be transferred back to the hospital who will review to see if the medication is still suitable for you.

Questions and Answers

What are my responsibilities?

1. 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.
2. 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.

3. Have the advised monitoring/blood tests as you have been advised. 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 a local 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 practice 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 with the medicine?

Your consultant should have informed you of the possible common side-effects 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 or GP practice. Your GP practice may need to ask for advice from your consultant before giving you 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 practice as your treatment may need to be changed

What about the other medicines I take?

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

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

Tell your GP practice and/or specialist team/consultant about any changes of circumstances which could affect safe management of your condition. For example. plans for pregnancy; plans to move/change GP practice.

If you register at a new GP practice a new Shared Care Agreement needs to be signed between your new GP practice 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.