

# Reuse of Medicines

## What is reuse of medicines?

Reuse of medicines is the term used to describe a situation where a medicine that was originally prescribed for one person is used by someone else.

## Why am I being asked about reuse of medicines?

Usually we would not reuse someone's medicines.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic the rules have been changed to allow reuse of medicines in certain situations. Reuse of medicines is allowed where it would mean that a person is able to be given medicines to urgently treat symptoms such as those experienced at the end of life, when, if medicines were not reused in this way the person would not be able to be given the medicine quickly enough.

We need permission to allow us to potentially reuse medicines that were originally prescribed for you (or your loved one), but which you/they no longer need, for someone else.

We also need permission to allow us to give you (or your loved one) medicines originally prescribed for someone else, if we cannot get supplies for you/them in another way.

We will make a record of your wishes within your care plan and follow this if we are thinking about either reusing your medicines or giving you a reused medicine.

## Why are you asking me about reuse of medicines now?

We hope that we won't need to reuse medicines. Lots of work is being done with GP practices, community pharmacies, medicines suppliers, care homes and hospices to make sure people can continue to get medicines in the usual ways.

However, we do know that there is a possibility that the COVID-19 pandemic may affect the supply of medicines. We think it is best to ask you about this now so that if, in the future, there is a time when reuse of medicines is needed we know what your wishes are.

## Why does the COVID-19 pandemic mean reuse of medicines is allowed?

The COVID-19 pandemic means that there is a bigger need for some medicines, such as those that are needed to relieve symptoms at the end of life. This means there may be shortages of some medicines. So that everyone can get the medicines they need, reuse of medicines is being allowed in care homes and hospices when otherwise the medicines would not be available for the person.

## **Is reuse of medicines safe?**

Yes. We have developed systems to make sure reuse of medicines is safe.

We will only reuse medicines which are no longer needed by the person who they were prescribed for – they may have stopped taking the medicine or they may have died.

We will only reuse medicines as a last resort when the medicines are needed urgently to treat a current symptom and we cannot get them in any other way in the time required.

We will only reuse medicines that have been assessed by a healthcare professional who has said they are safe to reuse.

## **Can anybody reuse medicines?**

No. Reuse of medicines is only allowed for people living in a care home or are currently in a hospice and only when the medicines have been assessed by a registered healthcare professional to make sure it is safe to reuse the medicines.

## **If I give my permission how long will this last?**

Your permission will remain for as long as the COVID-19 pandemic continues and the rules allow reuse. As soon as reuse of medicines is stopped your permission for this will no longer be valid. You can also stop your permission at any time by telling a member of staff.

## **If I do not give permission for reuse of medicines what will happen to the medicines I no longer need?**

If medicines that you no longer need cannot be reused they will be destroyed as waste medicines, following our usual processes.

## **If I do not give permission to being given a reused medicine what will happen?**

Reuse of medicines is a last resort. We will continue to work with your prescriber to make sure you have the medicines you need. If a medicine is needed that is not available we will work with your prescriber and pharmacy to find an alternative or obtain a supply as quickly as possible.