Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns about the care you are receiving or if you need support or advice our PALS service can help you.

The service is free and it works confidentially on your behalf.

You can contact the PALS officer directly on:

Tel: 01244 364217
Freephone: 0800 1954462 / 0800 1954463
Website: www.cwp.nhs.uk
Post: PALS Officer
CWP Trust Headquarters
Redesmere
Countess of Chester Health Park
Liverpool Road
Chester
CH2 1BQ

People who access our services are welcome to talk to the Team Manager if they are experiencing any problems with their care.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you require translation services or a copy of this document in other languages, audio tape, Braille or larger print, please speak to a member of CWP staff, e-mail info@cwp.nhs.uk or write to:
Communications, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Upton Lea, Countess of Chester Health Park, Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1BQ.

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Feedback

We welcome any suggestions you have, please send your comments, concerns, complaints and compliments to:
Cheshire & Wirral Partners, PALS, Complaints and Incidents Team, Trust Headquarters, Redesmere, Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1BQ.

For more information see www.cwp.nhs.uk

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The information in the leaflet was valid at the date of production May 2014 and is due for review in May 2016.

Leaflet code: G-OL-06-036
You have been prescribed a medicine off-label.

What does off-label mean?

All medicines used in the UK need to have a license (nowadays often called a marketing authority).

The manufacturers take responsibility for any problems with a medicine which is used according to its license.

Any licensed medicine that is used in a different way to the license can be said to be off-label. For example:

- When a medicine is used for a different disorder than in the license e.g. when sodium valproate is used for preventing mood swings instead of for epilepsy, it is being used off-label.
- When a medicine is given in a different way to that on the license, e.g. if a tablet is crushed to make it easier to swallow. If you want to crush a tablet please check that it is safe to do so. Some tablets should not be crushed or there may be a liquid or soluble tablet available. Your pharmacist will be able to advise on this.
- When a medicine is given to a different group of patients for whom it was licensed. E.g. when a medicine licensed for adults is used for a child.

All these examples are said to be off-label use. This is perfectly legal and the prescriber will have considered the licensed alternatives before prescribing medicines off-label.

In this instance the responsibility for any problems that arise remains with the prescribing doctor and staff at Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

Prescribing off-label isn't such an unusual thing. There are some conditions for which off-label treatments are the only ones available.

Are off label medicines safe to use?

All off-label medicines do have a license for some conditions, and have been shown to be safe enough to be used.

When off-label medicines are used the prescribing doctor is using his or her own expertise to determine the best treatment for you at the time.

This Trust has a policy of prescribing licensed medications wherever it is most appropriate, but recognises that frequently our doctors, who work closely with our pharmacists, will need to use off-label medicines to get the best result for their patients.

How can you tell if a medicine is prescribed off-label?

All medicines come with an information leaflet.

If the prescription is off label the reference to side effects will still apply, but you may find that there is no mention of your particular condition or the way the medication is being given.

If you ever have any questions after reading the information leaflet, ask your doctor, pharmacist or other healthcare worker for more information.

How do you find out more?

A medicine only tends to be used off-label once evidence has begun to appear that there are new uses for it. Ask your doctor if you wish to see some of this evidence.

There may be a support group of people with the same condition as you that you can also talk to.

The internet is an additional source of information – but remember that anyone can put information on the internet so it may not be as accurate as you would like.

Information about medicines used in mental health conditions can be found via a link on the trust website. To access more medicines information click the purple 'choice and medication' button.