Be clear about your medicines
Know your medicines

Do you know the difference between over-the-counter (non-prescription) medicines and prescription medicines?

Do you ever feel unsure about whether over-the-counter medicine you buy from your pharmacy may react with medicine prescribed from your doctor?

Who should you talk to about managing your medicine?

Ask your pharmacist

Over-the-counter medicines are those you can buy from your pharmacist without a prescription e.g. aspirin, antacids. Many common ailments, such as colds and flu, can be successfully self treated with medicines available from your pharmacy without the need for a doctor’s prescription.

Prescription medicines are prescribed by your doctor and are generally used for conditions that cannot be self treated. Before buying medicine from your pharmacy you should let the pharmacist know if you are taking prescription medicine. Your pharmacist is qualified to advise you.

Mixing medicines

Always think before taking more than one medicine because:

1. Some medicines react with others to produce unpleasant side effects.
2. Medicines can block the effects of others and stop them working.
3. Taking more than one medicine may mean that you get too much of a particular ingredient. Medicines you buy from your pharmacy can be just as strong as prescription medicine.
It's up to you
Your doctor and pharmacist rely on the information you give to them. They may not know, for instance, if you are taking prescription medicine at the same time as over-the-counter medicine. Make sure your doctor and pharmacist know what other medicine you are taking, so that you can get the best advice.

Remember
• Your pharmacist is able to offer you expert advice on medicines. They can advise you which medicines you can and cannot take together and which of your medicines are out of date and should not be used.
• When visiting the doctor or pharmacist, always provide as much information as you can about the medicines you are taking.
• Always read the label before taking any medicine and only take the dose recommended on the packet.
• If in doubt, ask your pharmacist or doctor for advice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prescription</th>
<th>Time of day taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e.g. Atenolol</td>
<td>every morning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to use this card.

1. Make a list on this card of all the medicines you are taking.

2. Show this list to your pharmacist when you are next buying medicine.
Information for you
There are ways to check the medicines you are taking. All medicines should come with instructions on how to take or use them and a list of what they contain. You should always read the label or instruction leaflet before you start any course of treatment. Make sure you know how to take your medicine, how long to take it for and how much to take. If you have any queries ask your pharmacist.

More help
Electronic Medicines Compendium
www.emc.vhn.net
NHS Direct 24 hour telephone advice (tel: 0845 4647)
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

My medicines
Fill in the card below with a list of your medicines. Detach and fold it and show it to the pharmacist who can advise you on what you are taking and what you need to take. It can also be used to help remind you when you should take your medicine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Over-the-counter medicine (non-prescription)</th>
<th>Time of day taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e.g. paracetamol</td>
<td>only when needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>