



## Why do we make changes to your prescribed medicines?

NHS Waltham Forest Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is responsible for managing the medicines budget spent by doctors in our area.

During 2014/15 almost £32 million was spent in Waltham Forest on more than 3.5 million prescription items.

The Medicines Optimisation Team at Waltham Forest CCG is a team of pharmacists who work hard to make sure local people get best value for money from NHS medicines.

If more money is spent on medicines than is available, the extra money has to come from other areas of healthcare. This means we may not be able to provide all the services we would like.

The Medicines Optimisation Team continually monitors the cost of medicines to see if savings can be made. The team also helps GP practices make changes to patients' medication when necessary.

Any changes we advise are done after consulting with your doctor and without reducing the quality of treatment you receive.

## What sort of changes do we make?

The changes we make can be split into different categories:

### 1. Generic switches

The generic name of a medicine is the actual name of the active ingredient, rather than the brand name, which is chosen by the manufacturer.

For example, Lipitor® is the brand name for the medicine atorvastatin.

Generic medicines are manufactured to the same tight quality controls and contain the same active ingredients as branded medicines, although the appearance and sometimes taste may be slightly different.

Competition between different manufacturers means that medicines prescribed by the generic name usually cost much less.

### 2. Brand switches

Sometimes it is important that patients receive a particular brand of medicine rather than the generic form.

For example, the drug lithium should be prescribed by brand, either as Priadel®, Camcolit® or Liskonum®. If such medicines are prescribed by the generic name we will try to switch to the brand.

### 3. Class switches

There may be several different drugs in the same group of medicines. When there is no difference in how effective the different drugs are, the cheapest drug in the group should be used.

For example, we now use omeprazole or lansoprazole for indigestion type disorders instead of esomeprazole.

### 4. Isomers

Sometimes a particular drug is available as a slightly different chemical form (called an 'isomer'). Often there is no advantage to using the isomer although it may be considerably more expensive.

For example, desloratadine, an antihistamine, is the isomer of loratadine. We would recommend prescribing loratadine.

### 5. Dose changes

Sometimes a low strength medicine is prescribed twice a day or as two tablets/capsules once a day. It is often just as effective, more convenient and less expensive to prescribe a higher strength once a day.

We call this dose or dose optimisation. For example, a prescription for atorvastatin 20mg take two tablets every night would be changed to atorvastatin 40mg take one tablet every night.

### 6. Tablets and capsules

Sometimes the same medicine might be available as both tablets and capsules. If there is a difference in cost, we will recommend that the less expensive product is prescribed.