

Information about changes to medicines or treatments on the NHS: **Changes to herbal treatment prescribing**

The NHS will be asking doctors to stop or greatly reduce the prescribing of some treatments from December 2017. This is because the treatments are:

- Not as safe as other treatments OR
- Not as good (effective) as other treatments OR
- More expensive than other treatments that do the same thing.

This includes herbal treatments.

This document will explain why the changes are happening and where you can get more information and support.

Why will herbal treatments not be prescribed anymore?

In the UK, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) allows herbal products to be marketed for minor health conditions that do not need to be treated by a doctor and if they have a 'traditional herbal registration'.

However, there is no need to prove that a herbal treatment actually works; the registration is just based on the fact that the product has been used as a traditional medicine for a long time.

Herbal treatments do not have a full medicines licence* from the MHRA which means that they may not have been tested to ensure that they work, that they are safe and that they are manufactured to high standards.

Some herbal treatments may also cause side effects and may interfere with how other medicines work.

In the past some herbal medicines have been prescribed on the NHS. However, because the NHS needs to make sure that it only spends money on treatments that have evidence that they work, they will no longer be prescribed on the NHS.

*Having a licence means that a medicine has passed tests to ensure that it is effective, safe and manufactured to appropriate quality standards.

What can I do if I still want to take a herbal treatment?

Most herbal treatments can be bought over-the-counter from a pharmacy (chemist), supermarket or health food shop.

If you are taking any other medicines, or have any health conditions, you should ask for advice from a pharmacist before buying a herbal treatment to make sure that it is safe for you to take.

Buying herbal treatments from the internet is not recommended as the quality of these may vary and they may not always be safe.

Where can I find more information and support?

- You can speak to your local pharmacist, GP or the person who prescribed the medication to you
- National and local charities can offer advice and support
- The Patients Association can also offer support and advice: <https://www.patients-association.org.uk/> or call 020 8423 8999
- Healthwatch: www.healthwatch.co.uk

Find out more about the medicines that are being stopped or reduced:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/medicines/items-which-should-not-be-routinely-prescribed/>

Find out more about licensed and unlicensed medicines:

<https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/off-label-or-unlicensed-use-of-medicines-prescribers-responsibilities#a-licensed-medicine-meets-acceptable-standards-of-efficacy-safety-and-quality>