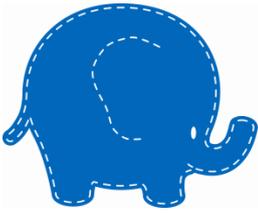


Department of Pharmacy

Side effects from medicines

Information for children and young people aged
14 and over - to be used as a discussion aid.



What is the purpose of this leaflet?

You or your health professional thinks that a medicine you have been taking may have caused a side effect. This leaflet has been written to help explain about side effects to medicines.

What is a side effect?

Medicines help you feel better but sometimes they can also make you feel poorly. For example, you may feel sick or get an itchy rash. This is called a side effect.

A side effect is an unwanted reaction or symptom from a medicine. You may have also heard this called an 'adverse drug reaction'. A side effect may happen immediately or it may happen a few days or weeks after you have taken a medicine.

Doctors don't always know when a side effect will happen or why some people have side effects when other people don't. Everyone reacts differently to medicines. When doctors prescribe a medicine, they weigh up the benefit of the medicine against the risks of a side effect.



Can I be certain that a medicine has caused my symptoms?

Often it is impossible to be certain whether a symptom is *definitely* due to a medicine. This is because your symptoms could be due to an illness or some other cause.

If you have been taking lots of different medicines it can be difficult to pinpoint which (if any) medicines may have caused your symptoms. This can be very frustrating for everyone.

To work out what might be causing your symptoms, here are some things that you and your doctor or nurse might discuss:

- When did you first notice the symptoms?
- Is there anything else that might have caused the symptoms?
- Have you ever had symptoms like this before?
- Are the symptoms a known side effect of the medicine?

Risks and benefits of children's medicines

All medicines can have side effects but it is important to balance these against the benefits of medicines. No one wants to miss out on a medicine when the benefits of taking it are greater than the side-effects. If your symptoms are mild, you may not need to stop the medicine. If you experience a serious side effect then you and your doctor or nurse will want to discuss other options such as changing the dose, stopping the medicine or switching to a different medicine.

If you have experienced problems after taking a medicine, it is natural to have concerns and questions. Here are some questions you might want to ask your doctor or nurse:

- How certain is it that my medicine has caused a side effect?
- Should I stop taking the medicine?
- Will somebody record this side effect in my medical notes?
- Will I ever be able to have the medicine again?
- Will I experience any long-term problems due to any side effects?
- Will I get similar side effects from the medicine?
- Is there an alternative medicine I could take?

Will there be a record of my concerns?

You can ask your doctor or nurse to record any concerns about your medicines in your medical records. If the doctor recommends stopping the medicine, s/he will usually put an alert in your records. This will tell other health professionals that you should not have the medicine.

If you think you have had a side effect to a medicine, you should mention this next time you see a doctor or nurse.

Reporting side effects to the medicines safety 'watchdog'

Anyone can report side effects to the official medicines safety 'watchdog', the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). You can complete a Yellow Card yourself at any time. You do not have to wait for your doctor to complete one.

All information sent to the MHRA is confidential. The MHRA keep records of side-effects and may take action if they are concerned. To find out how to make a report, ring the MHRA helpline on free phone 0808 100 3352 or visit their website www.yellowcard.gov.uk.

For more information about possible side effects, please see the patient information leaflet that came with your medicine. If you did not receive a leaflet, please ask a health professional for one or visit www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk

Who to contact for further details

If you have any questions about your medication whilst you are in hospital, please do not hesitate to ask one of the Pharmacy team or telephone us on 0151 252 5311. This leaflet was developed as part of the ADRIC (Adverse Drug Reactions in Children) Programme which was funded by the National Institute for Health Research.



Parents and carers. This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child's treatment. This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust
Eaton Road
Liverpool
L12 2AP
Tel: 0151 228 4811
www.alderhey.nhs.uk