

Medicines Optimisation Campaign

Only order what you need

Communications Toolkit

March 2025

Introduction

The ICB's Medicines Optimisation Team are working to launch a behaviour change campaign across North East and North Cumbria ICB. This public-facing campaign complements major ongoing areas of clinical work, where prescribing has an impact on health and outcomes:

- **Medicine waste (Over ordering and stockpiling of medicines, under the 'Are the Medicines Working' campaign theme)**

"Are your medicines working for you?" is an initiative designed to support more open conversations between patients and healthcare professionals about the prescribing of long-term medicines. The 'only order what you need' campaign is aimed at the public and is centred around educating patients on the impact of over-ordering and stockpiling prescription medicines, and encouraging self-reflection of their ordering behaviour.

About the toolkit

This toolkit provides a brief overview of the campaign. It includes key messages, newsletter items, a one-page staff explainer, links to patient-facing materials and social media posts for you to customise and use in your comms and engagement work.

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Promotional Material

A range of promotional materials, such as posters, digital display screens, and social media graphics, are available to download from the Campaign Hub website (nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk).

For further information please contact victoriacasey@nhs.net

Key messages

Only order what you need (Are your medicines working for you) - Raising awareness of the impact of over-ordering and stockpiling prescription medicine and reducing medicine waste.

Website - reducemedicinewaste.co.uk

- Around £20 million is wasted every year on unused medicines. This includes inhalers, pain medication and creams, across our region. By only ordering what we need we can make sure NHS resources go where they are most needed.
- Ordering medicines when they aren't needed can mean you end up with more than you need in your cupboard. 'Stockpiling' is holding on to medicines that you don't use.
- The implications of stockpiling can mean wasted resources (medicines that aren't used go out of date and have to be thrown away); Supply issues (stockpiling can create shortages); and medicine safety issues for patients (holding onto medication can lead to mistakes about what to take and when).
- This campaign starts by raising awareness of the financial impact of medicines waste across the NHS and how the patient can positively impact on this by only ordering what prescription medicine they need.
- The call to action is to visit the campaign website for more information including actions patients can make to immediately reduce over-ordering.

General public

What can I do about it?

As patients we can all take simple steps to make sure medicines are not wasted, so the NHS can focus resources where they are needed most. Here's how:

1. Only order what you need: Check what medicines you have at home before you place an order, and only order what you need.
2. Hand back: When you collect your medicines from your local pharmacy, make sure that you only have what you need. If you return an item before you leave the pharmacy, it can be reused.
3. Stick to your routine: Order your medication when you are running low, and no earlier. You can set up notes in your calendar to help you check to see if you need to order more.

Suggested bulletin/newsletter copy

Only order what you need (Are your medicines working for you)

Around £20 million is wasted every year on unused medicines. This includes inhalers, pain medication and creams, across our region. By patients only ordering what they need we can make sure NHS resources go where they are most needed.

About the campaign

When patients order medicines when they aren't needed, this can mean they end up with more than they need in their cupboards which leads to stockpiling. This campaign starts by raising awareness of the financial impact of medicines waste across the NHS and how the patient can positively impact on this by only ordering what prescription medicine they need, when they need it.

The call to action is to visit the campaign website for more information, which outlines simple steps patients can make to help reduce medicine waste.

How can you support the campaign?

This campaign raises awareness of the financial impact of medicine waste across the NHS and how patients can positively impact on this by only ordering what prescription medicine they need. As a healthcare provider please support the campaign by displaying the campaign materials in your setting. Encourage conversations with patients around how to manage their prescription medicine usage and supply.

There's a range of campaign resources available to download at:

nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk

- **Digital screen adverts**
- **A4 posters**
- **Social media graphics**
- **Website banners**

One-page explainer for staff

The North East and North Cumbria ICB Medicines Optimisation Team will be rolling out an impactful behaviour-change campaign across the region.

This campaign aligns with ongoing clinical work, emphasising the critical role of prescribing in healthcare outcomes.

Medicine waste - Only order what you need (Are your medicines working for you)

- Raises awareness of the financial impact of medicine waste.
- Encourages patients to self-reflect on their own ordering behaviour and educates on small steps patients can make to help reduce the over-ordering of prescription medicines.
- Promotes more self-management behaviour in patients when tracking and ordering medicines.

Why are they being launched?

This public-facing campaign has been developed to complement major ongoing areas of clinical work, where prescribing has an impact on health and outcomes.

How can we help?

There are four main areas where you can help with the roll out of the campaign and key messages:

Conversations: Engage in meaningful discussions with patients about the campaign topics.

Resources: Utilise campaign materials to support your conversations and educate patients.

Promotion: Encourage patients to visit campaign websites for additional information.

Awareness: Raise awareness of these campaigns within your practice and among colleagues.

Resources can be found on the campaign hub: nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk

Public facing website: reducemedicinewaste.co.uk

Social media posts

Below we have written some sample posts for social media channels, including Facebook and X (formally known as Twitter). Please note that these are to be accompanied by the relevant campaign social graphics which can be downloaded from the Campaign Hub website (nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk).

Patient facing:

£20m wasted on medicines

Medicines waste costs the NHS millions. That could fund life-saving care. Help by ordering only what's needed.

For more information visit reducemedicinewaste.co.uk

Fund care, not medicine waste

£20m is wasted on unused medicines in our region every year. That could pay for 535 nurses. Order only what you need and help protect NHS resources.

For more information visit reducemedicinewaste.co.uk

Medicines stacking up?

Every year, £20m is lost to unused medicines. Help stop waste. Check before you reorder and only order the medicines you actually need.

For more information visit reducemedicinewaste.co.uk

Patient Text Message

Medicines stacking up? Every year, £20m is lost to unused medicines. Help stop waste. Check before you reorder and only order the medicines you actually need.

Are your medicines stacking up? Only order what you need.

Every year, about £20 million worth of medicine goes to waste in the North East and North Cumbria. This includes things like inhalers, pain medicine, and creams.

The NHS needs your help! Following these easy steps when ordering your medicines:

How you can help

1. **Only order what you need** - before getting more, check what medicine you already have.
2. **Return extras** – when picking up your medicine at the pharmacy, only take what you need. If you return something before leaving, it can be used again.
3. **Stick to your routine** – order your medicine when you're running low, but not too soon.

By doing this, you will:

- Get the right medicines and care
- Help reduce waste
- Save NHS resources

It's also safer! Keeping too much medicine can cause confusion, especially if your prescription changes.

If you have questions, your doctor or pharmacist can help. Reach out to them for advice.

Find out more on our [website](#).

For further information on any of the campaigns please contact victoriacasey@nhs.net