

Empowering patients to manage their repeat prescriptions

This briefing aims to provide an overview of the resources available to help empower patients to manage ordering their own repeat prescription.

Key recommendations

- Use interactions with patients as an opportunity to highlight the benefits of managing their own repeat prescription ordering, with an emphasis on online ordering using the GP practice online ordering process, NHS app (England, Isle of Man), My Health Online (Wales) or other effective app or website for those who have internet access.
- Use patient resources, e.g. patient guides or leaflets to support people setting up online accounts and ordering repeat prescriptions.
- Ensure all GP practice staff in England and the Isle of Man are aware of the benefits of the NHS app and encourage patients to sign up for an NHS account if they are able to.
- Use a range of different patient resources to emphasise the benefits of online ordering of repeat prescriptions.
- Encourage patients to only order what they need each time, to avoid wastage and stockpiling, whilst providing reassurance that it is not necessary to order medication every month for it to stay on a repeat prescription.
- Patients who are not taking their medicine(s), or not taking them as prescribed, should be encouraged to discuss the reasons why with a qualified healthcare professional (e.g. doctor, nurse, community pharmacist or GP practice pharmacist) to try to come up with a suitable solution.
- Patients who don't understand what a particular medicine is for or how to take it, should be encouraged to discuss this with their local community or GP practice pharmacist.

Patient resources

In England, information on how to order a repeat prescription is available on the NHS website at <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/how-to-order-a-repeat-prescription/>. Information regarding the NHS app and an NHS account (including links to download the NHS app) can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/>.

NHS England have produced a range of free materials for GP practices to use to help promote GP online services to patients. These are available via <https://www.england.nhs.uk/gp-online-services/support/supporting-material/>.

In Wales, information for patients on [My Health Online](#) is available from NHS Digital Health and Care Wales.

In Scotland, NHS Inform provide information for patients about ordering repeat prescriptions on their website at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/tests-and-treatments/medicines-and-medical-aids/prescriptions#getting-your-prescription>.

In Northern Ireland, patients can find out if their GP practice offers online services, including ordering repeat prescriptions, and how to set up an online account from the nidirect website at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-online-services>.

In addition, patient information, text messages and a poster are available as attachments with this resource which can be adapted for local use.

Summary

Repeat prescribing can reduce the need for appointments and ensure continuity of medicines.¹ However, ordering repeat prescriptions must be managed properly, otherwise, they can take up a significant amount of time for primary care prescribers and practice staff and result in overordering, stockpiling and wastage.¹ In addition, poor management of repeat prescriptions can result in an overly complex process for patients (extra telephone calls and practice visits) and put patients at risk of potential confusion, transcription and medication issue errors.²

Increasing the uptake of the effective online ordering of repeat prescriptions for those who have internet access or access to mobile apps and encouraging patients to manage their own repeat prescriptions, where possible, and only order what they need each time can overcome these issues and improve the process for all concerned.

References

1. Department of Health and Social Care. Good for you, good for us, good for everybody. A plan to reduce overprescribing to make patient care better and safer, support the NHS, and reduce carbon emissions. September 2021. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1019475/good-for-you-good-for-us-good-for-everybody.pdf
2. NHS England. Patient Online - encouraging patients to order repeat prescriptions online. Publications Gateway Reference 06286. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/po-why-should-i-repeat-prescriptions.pdf> Last accessed 22/02/2023

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| Additional resources available | Bulletin | https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-325-empowering-patients-to-manage-their-repeat-prescriptions |
| | Tools | |

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