

## **The Prescription Preparation Process and Common Complaints**

It would be ideal if you received every item you need automatically each month. But whilst what you need might appear obvious it isn't that straightforward for the surgery or your pharmacy.

### **Every item needs a prescription**

Your Pharmacy or Dispensary needs a prescription from the surgery for every single item they give to you. You might have had it for years, but every single issue needs a new prescription form printed.

### **Allowed items are on your Repeat Template with conditions**

Items that your doctor allows you to have prescribed are on your medical record's Repeat Template. Each item has:

- A maximum number of issues, the number of times it can be prescribed before it has to be manually re-authorised. Some items a member of reception can authorise, others need to be tasked to your GP for assessment.
- An interval or period allowable between issues, the majority of issues are 28 days and anything being prescribed before this will raise a warning to say that it is being given too soon. Without a specific reason given items should not be issued more frequently than every 28 days. Some items are only allowed after longer intervals, for instance certain inhalers will last for three months or 100 days and won't be given more frequently than this without good reason being specified.

### **Repeat prescriptions are not printed automatically**

Every item that is given to you has to be manually printed on a prescription from your Repeat Template. This doesn't happen automatically for anyone, someone has to make a request for the item to be printed, be it yourself or your pharmacy. If your pharmacy manages your medication then they will ask you what you need for next month at the point of collection, filling out the white repeat slip in front of you and setting a date for when the items will be ready. The surgery will accept these requests up to a week before the medication is due, so in most cases a pharmacy won't actually have your medication ready for the due date until 3-4 working days beforehand. With 13,000 patients at Cromer Group Practice it is simply impractical to have everyone's medication held ready and waiting for them any earlier than this.

### **Medication will only be ready close to pre-arranged dates**

If you need your medication at a different time than that arranged you must give advance notice as the surgery and pharmacy needs time to put in the request, print the prescription and then prepare the medication. Please don't turn up early for your monthly items expecting to collect them immediately without prior notice.

### **You need to choose which items you want every time**

Pharmacies are discouraged from ordering items without monthly patient consent of what they want. You can't simply ask for everything on your Repeat Template every month, many patients have items available to them that might only be used for a few months each year for re-occurring but not chronic conditions. Over ordering of unnecessary medication already costs the NHS a fortune so it is important that patients choose what they need each month rather than everything being ordered.

### **The prescription process is complicated and involves a chain of people**

Every prescription printed by the Prescription team in reception has to be sorted and then passed on to your assigned doctor. The doctor has to find time in their very busy day to look at and sign every script, a few hundred a day, before passing them back to reception to be forwarded on to a pharmacy or held for collection. This is if there are no complications, some items require questions to be asked before printing, or re-authorisation. Everything is done manually; it can't be automated as it requires human checking for appropriateness.

### **You are responsible for making sure you get the medication you need**

Your pharmacy doesn't know which items you have ordered yourself, by dropping in a paper request, through the surgery's online system or directly with a doctor or nurse. If separate prescriptions are printed they will be handled by multiple different people and won't necessarily be put together. It is your responsibility to check you are receiving everything you are expecting, you are the only person that knows.

### **Prescriptions aren't sent to a pharmacy without your consent**

If you haven't specified a pharmacy you'd like to attend with the surgery, any prescription that is requested by or for you will remain at the surgery reception desk until you collect it. A pharmacy should not receive your prescriptions unless you have consented for them to do so.

## Items should not be supplied without prescription

If the pharmacy has not been given a prescription with your items on they are not authorised to supply you with the medication, the surgery must print the prescription first and it is not then the pharmacy's responsibility if items have been missed off from your request.

### Common comments and answers:

#### ***"I've been having it for years and it's always been here, why isn't it ready?"***

There are many reasons why an item won't be ready for you. It might need re-authorising by your doctor, has been ordered too early without a reason given, wasn't clearly ticked on the repeat request or the request got lost, the request reached the surgery but the item wasn't printed by mistake (one person prints thousands of items, selecting them one by one, in a day), it has been delayed in getting signed by the doctor or held up between the surgery and your pharmacy. Until the pharmacy physically has the script in their possession they won't start getting it ready, and legally shouldn't be handing out items unless in an emergency situation or the doctor agrees to give them a prescription within 72 hours. Even common items are being affected by supply shortages nowadays.

#### ***"I'm going on holiday today/tomorrow and would like to collect my medication today"***

If you haven't given the pharmacy advance notification that you would like your medication early, three working days for a request to go to the surgery and return as a prescription for preparation, then you will have to wait until the prescription can be obtained.

#### ***"An item that my doctor started me on last month isn't with my monthly medication, why not?"***

If a new item was given to you by your pharmacy last month it won't be printed by the surgery again until it is requested. If you told the pharmacy at the time you collected when your monthly items are next due then they would endeavour to get it ordered at the same time, if you just asked for it to be re-ordered then it would come in the usual 28 days which might not be at the same time as the other items. **The surgery takes no action to tie together new items with other ongoing items**, and the pharmacy doesn't know what you need until you ask, especially as the new item might need a review or change in dose since it was first issued.

#### ***"My doctor knows what I have every month and gets it sorted for me"***

Other than initiating, reviewing and signing your medication your doctor has no involvement in printing your prescriptions each month. They know what you should be having but simply can't go through every one of their patients and perform an administrative task of printing scripts; their time is too valuable to the NHS to be doing this. Every prescription is only printed through a request, and it is printed by a Prescription clerk. You need to make sure when collecting your medication that the request for next time is set up with every item you will want. If you don't ask for it no one else will, the doctor might have added it to 'repeat', this just means you are able to ask for it again without your GP needing to re-authorise it first.

#### ***"I requested my medication yesterday, why isn't it ready yet?"***

It takes three working days for a request to be processed by the surgery, return to your pharmacy and the medication to be prepared. You need to allow this much time before it is ready. Sometimes things do get completed faster, but allowing three days avoids disappointment. Items can be requested 'urgently' but there should be a good reason why it is needed urgently. Urgent last minute requests slow things down, think of them like queue jumping, everyone behind has to wait that bit longer.

#### ***"If I don't order the item every month I won't be able to get it anymore"***

The white repeat slip part of your prescription only shows the items from your Repeat Template that were printed on the green part. Even though they are not printed, those items will remain on your Repeat Template and are available to be requested. Don't order items every month that you don't need or have an excess of at home, you can still order them once you need them again.

#### ***"Whose fault it is?"***

As you can see, the prescription process is incredibly complicated. Nothing is being tracked from the start to the end so finding out why something went wrong can be close to impossible, or hugely time consuming which only serves to delay other tasks. Both the surgery and pharmacies are working in your best interest. We want you to have your medication on time, and it is more costly to us if things don't go smoothly. Please trust that we are trying our best for you.

Cromer Group Practice  
48 Overstrand Road  
Cromer  
NR27 0AJ  
[www.cromergrouppractice.nhs.uk](http://www.cromergrouppractice.nhs.uk)