




**Polypharmacy:**   
getting the balance right

# National Polypharmacy Programme

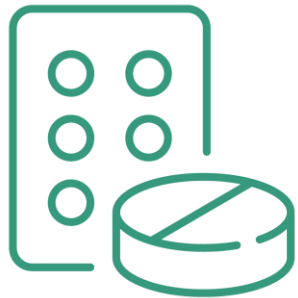
James McMahon, Senior Project Manager



Health Innovation  
West of England

# Polypharmacy: the statistics

- Studies have shown that that over **50% of older people** are prescribed a medicine with **more harm than benefit** leading to avoidable morbidity, hospitalisation and mortality.
- Polypharmacy adds **preventable cost** to the healthcare system and **diminishes quality care** for the patient



In England in Feb 2022 there were **876,317 people on 10 or more medicines** and 349,653 were 75 or over



A person taking 10 or more medicines is **300% more likely** to be admitted to **hospital**



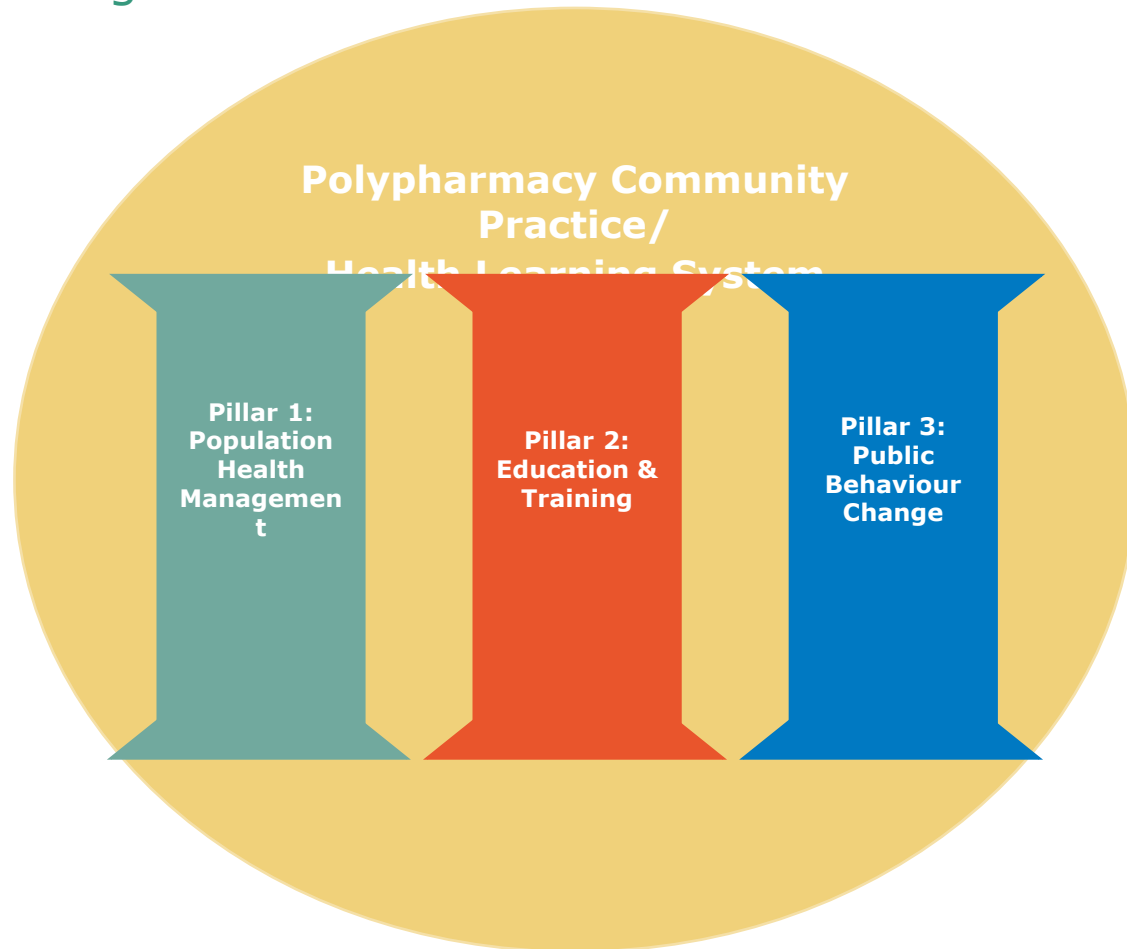
Over a six-month period, over **three quarters of people** over the age of 70 will have an **adverse drug reaction**



There has been a **53% increase** in the **number of emergency hospital admissions** caused by adverse drug reactions

# The AHSN Polypharmacy Programme: core pillars

The core principle of **Polypharmacy** is to support local systems address problematic polypharmacy through:



## **Pillar 1: Population Health Management**

Using data (NHS BSA Polypharmacy Comparators) to understand PCN risks and identify patients for prioritisation for a Structured Medication Review

## **Pillar 2: Education & Training**

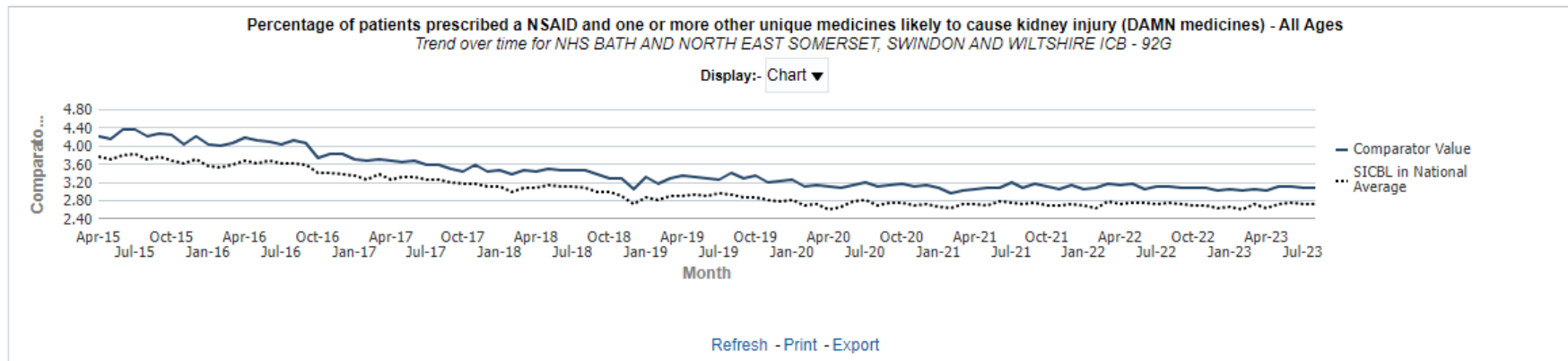
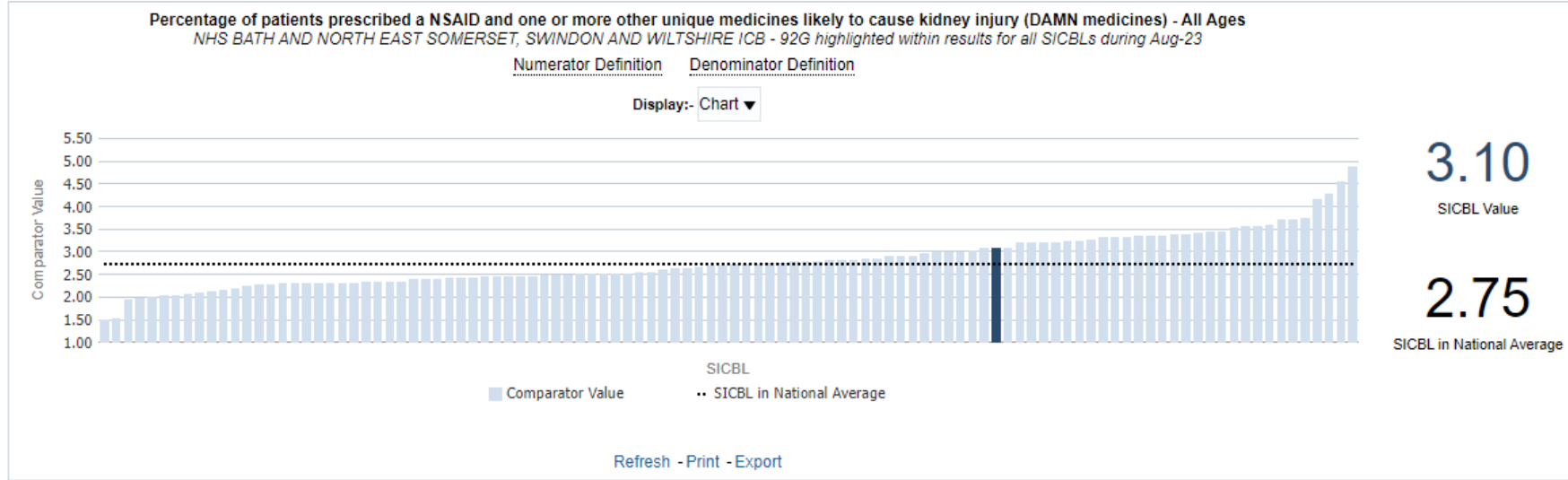
Running local **Polypharmacy** Action Learning Sets (ALSs) to upskill the primary care workforce to be more confident about stopping unnecessary medicines. ALS model originally developed and piloted by Wessex AHSN and supported by Health Education England (HEE)

## **Pillar 3: Public Behaviour Change**

A menu of public-facing campaigns to change public perceptions of a "pill for every ill" and encourage patients to open up about medicines. e.g., Me + My Medicines, Are Your Medicines Working For You?

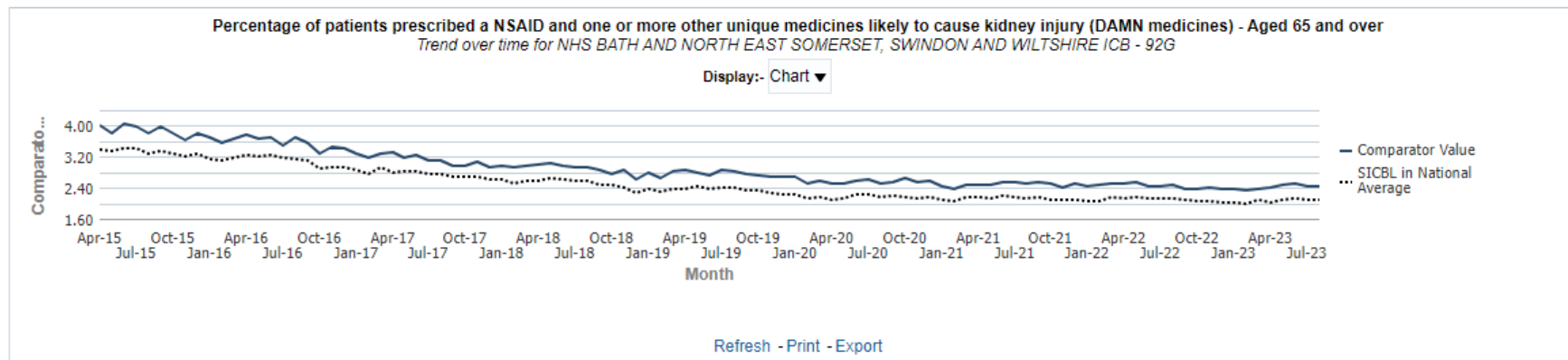
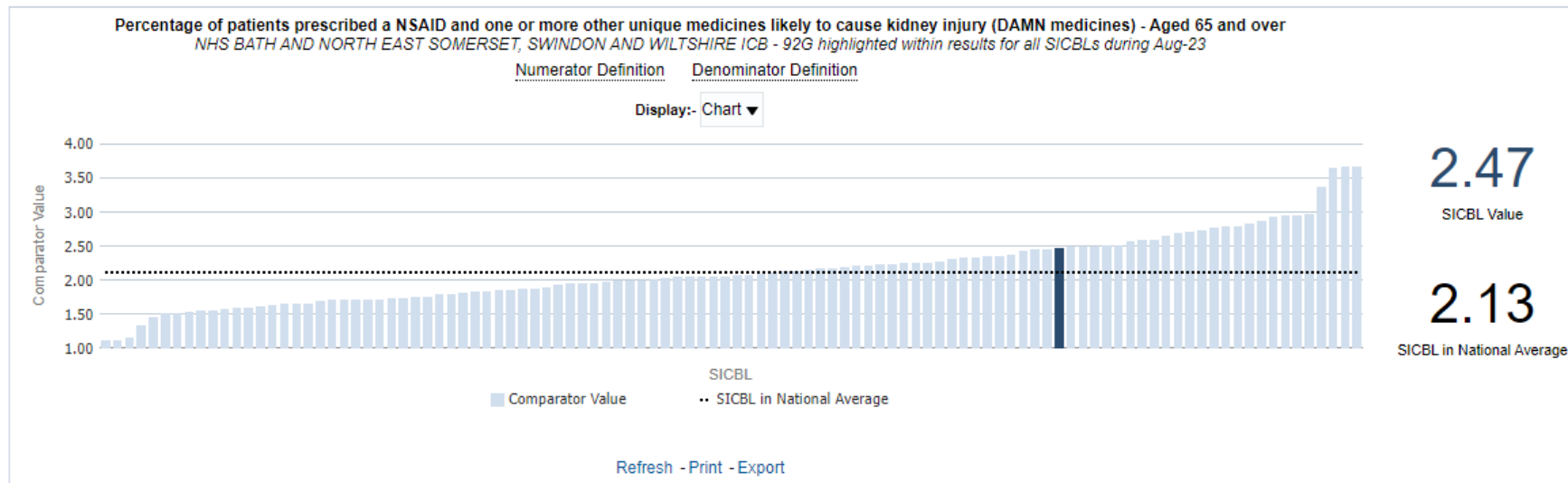


\* Comparator  ▼  
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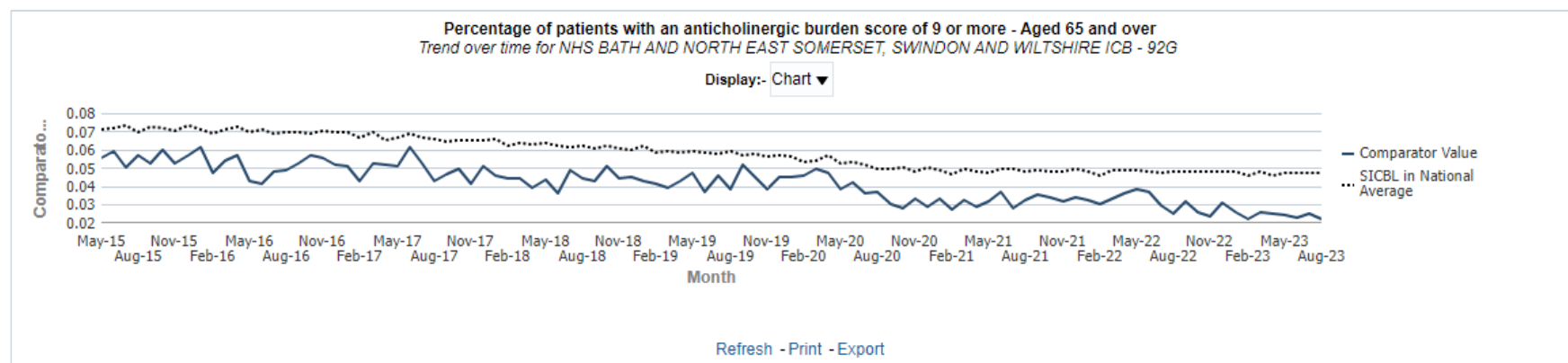
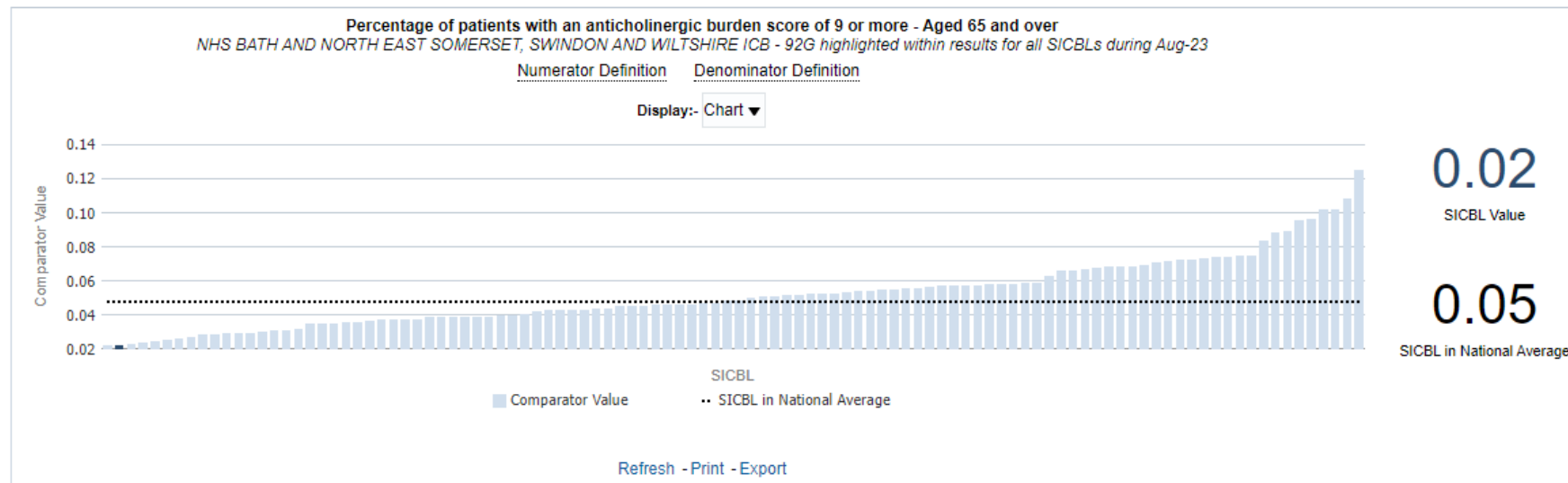


\* Comparator

\* Age Band

\* Period

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# Available resources:

**Clinician Information and Implementation Guide**

**Patient Invitation Letter for a Structured Medication Review**

**Helpful question prompts for patients**

**Safely stopping your medicine patient information leaflet**

Zoom in (Ctrl+Plus)

## Supporting patients before a medication review: Patient information pack.

**Who should be invited for a medication review and why?**

People who may benefit from a medication review are those who are taking several medicines regularly or are taking medicines for long term conditions. The medication review can help to identify any medicines that are no longer appropriate or any that may need a change in dose. The healthcare professional should also think about whether the person has had or has any risk factors for developing adverse drug reactions and whether any monitoring is needed.

**Why has this patient pack been developed?**

If the NHS is to have an impact on reducing overprescribing we need to change how we work and make sure patients are supported to come on the journey with us. The National Overprescribing Review published in 2021 recommends a patient-centred approach to medicines optimisation and the need to support patients to open up about their medicines concerns and issues.

In 2022, NHSE commissioned the AHSN Network Polypharmacy Programme to test and evaluate two existing patient centred materials, to understand whether patients were more confident about talking to their GP or Pharmacist about their medicines after receiving and reading the materials prior to their medication review.

**Patient feedback (n188) showed that:**

- 71% agreed that the leaflet helped them to think about the medicines they take and what they needed to discuss about their medicines with their GP or pharmacist.
- Just under two-thirds (64%) felt more confident talking to their GP or pharmacist about their medicines after reading the leaflet.
- 86% agreed that they were able to have meaningful conversations about their medicines with their GP or pharmacist.
- The majority (70%) of patients that completed the survey agreed that they would recommend that all patients receive this leaflet from their practice when having a review or conversation about medicines.

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Text box for GP practice name and address

Dear <name of patient>

## Reviewing your medicines

The practice is running a new service to help you with your medicines - this is called a medication review.

A medication review is a chance to check that your medicines are the best ones for you.

**What will happen at the review?**

- You will have a face-to-face appointment or telephone call with the practice pharmacist or GP.
- They will check your medicines are working - and not causing side effects.
- It is also a chance for you to tell us how you are getting on with your medicines - and to ask questions and find out more about them.

**Why are we doing this?**

We are doing this to make sure that your medicines are the right ones for you.

- The purpose of the review is not to save money.
- Also it is not to check if you are taking your medicines.

No medicines will be altered without agreement between you and the pharmacist or GP.

**What happens next?**

We will contact you to make an appointment to speak with the practice pharmacist or the GP at the practice or over the telephone.

- The pharmacist or GP will explain what your medicines are for.
- They will check if any changes to your medicines are needed.
- There will also be a chance to have your questions answered.

On the other side there are some questions you might want to ask about your medicines at the appointment. >>

Text box for name and signature

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Questions to think about before the appointment that you may wish to ask

- Why am I taking these medicines?
- How do I know they are helping me?
- Do I still need all my medicines?
- Why do I have to take so many pills?
- What side effects do they cause?
- It is difficult for me to open the containers - can you help with this?
- It is difficult to remember to take my medicines - can you help with this?
- It is difficult to swallow my medicines - can you help with this?
- I run out my medicines at different times - can you make this the same time for all of them?

See other language versions >>

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## Safely stopping your medicine

Today we have agreed that you should stop your medicine:

- This side of the leaflet outlines what to do when stopping this medicine.
- The other side has information if you need to stop gradually.

Keep a copy of this with you - and show it to anyone you see about your health.

**Why we have agreed to stop this medicine**

Medicines should only be used when they benefit you. In your case, we have agreed the benefits of this medicine are less than the risk of side effects caused by it.

**How will I stop this medicine?**

Stop taking your medicine straight away from:

.....

Stop taking your medicine gradually - see the other side of this leaflet.

**What might I notice and what should I do?**

Most people do not notice any difference after stopping. But do keep watching for any changes in your condition.

**Minor symptoms**

- Continue as agreed and keep watching for any changes in your condition.
- Talk to your practice pharmacist about these symptoms at your next appointment.

**Major symptoms**

- Call your practice straight away for help or call 111 if after hours.
- Severe symptoms - call 999 for help.

**What should I do next?**

Your next appointment is: .....

If you need to speak to somebody before ring ..... and ask for: .....

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## Available resources continued:

### Me and My Medicines Charter

### Are Your Medicines Working Patient Leaflet and Symptom Tracker

### Patient feedback form

### Patient film 'Preparing for a Structured Medication Review'

It's OK to ask...



## me + my medicines

**What is Me + My Medicines?**

Me + My Medicines is a patient-created, patient-led and health professional supported campaign to help patients get more benefit and greater value from their prescription medicines.

The Medicines Communication Charter encourages patients to ask, and clinicians to support people to ask about their medicines, to agree together a shared approach to overcoming any issues around their medicines.


### The Charter

- As your health professional I want to help us get the best from your medicines, and to do that we need to work together.
- As your health professional I can help and advise you about your medicines. You are the expert when it comes to your experience and views on how your medicines affect you and your daily life.
- Being honest about your understanding and feelings towards medicines helps me better understand and appreciate your situation.
- I will listen to you and respect what you tell me so we can share responsibility and work together to get the best from your medicines.
- This will help us to have an open conversation about your medicines, so that you feel confident that the decision we reach together is in your best interests and is based on your circumstances.

This was shared with: \_\_\_\_\_ on: \_\_\_\_\_

by: \_\_\_\_\_

TheAHSNNetwork




**Q1:** Do you think your medicines are improving your health, or stopping your health from getting worse? If so, in what way are they working?

**Q2:** When was the last time you didn't take at least one of your medicines? Why was this?

**Q3:** Have you experienced any unwanted side effects from your medication? If so, what have you noticed?

See other language versions >>>



Are your medicines working for you?



For some medical conditions, tracking your symptoms can help you and your healthcare professional find out if your medicines are working for you.

Write down when you experience:

	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
WEEK 1							
WEEK 2							
WEEK 3							
WEEK 4							

This symptom tracker will be reviewed by you and your healthcare professional during your appointment on: \_\_\_\_\_

See other language versions >>>

This short survey is to collect feedback on the 'Preparing for a Medication Review' information you received from your GP or pharmacist before you met with them for a Medication Review.

This information included:


- A letter inviting you to attend a medication review with example questions you may have thought about asking.
- An 'Are the Medicines Working?' leaflet encouraging you to ask questions about your medicines.
- A 'Safely stopping your medicine' leaflet to take home and refer to. (You will only have received this if you agreed to stop or gradually stop a medicine.)

The survey is anonymous. Your feedback will be used to understand how useful the information was in helping you prepare for your medication review. It will also help us to make improvements if needed.


The survey will take approximately seven minutes to complete.

Please say whether or not you agree with the following statements:

- The invitation letter I received clearly explained:
  - a. what a medication review is
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - Don't know / not applicable
  - b. why I had been invited to meet with the GP or pharmacist to discuss my medicines
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - Don't know / not applicable
  - c. what to expect from the appointment
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - Don't know / not applicable
- The example questions in the invitation letter helped me to think about what I wanted to ask my GP or pharmacist about my medicines.
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know / not applicable

NIHR Yorkshire and Humber Patient Safety Research Collaboration  TheAHSNNetwork

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Preparing for a Medication Review

Direction: Planning shot of terrace street, showing characters in the window talking medicines.

4 Voiceover: In some cases, medicines that were started in mid-life may not be suitable as we enter older age.

5 Voiceover: Sometimes taking lots of different medicines can make you feel unwell.

Direction: As the woman sits down, the ages (hair and clothes change) and the furniture in the room becomes more modern (but stays in exactly the same place).

Direction: The camera zooms in to the character and the background changes to outside.

<https://thehealthinnovationnetwork.co.uk/programmes/medicines/polypharmacy/>





**Limited  
spaces**

## Action Learning Set workshops

**9.30 – 12:15 on 24 January, 7 and 28 February  
2024**

The AHSN polypharmacy programme invites you to join our Action Learning Sets (ALS) to help build GP and prescribing health care professionals confidence in, and understanding of, the complex issues surrounding stopping inappropriate medicines safely. Delegates need to attend all three sessions.

The ALS will also help PCNs deliver the medicines optimisation elements of the new Directed Enhanced Services contract and contributes to QoF.

**Find out more and book now:**

<https://events.weahsn.net/PolypharmacyActionLearningSetCohort11>

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## ***Polypharmacy Programme – Community of Practice 6*** ***7th December 2023 12:00-13:30***

***Local network of passionate and enthusiastic clinicians who all working to address the system-wide challenges of problematic polypharmacy in the West of England Region (BNSSG, BSW, Gloucestershire). Our Community of Practice is an opportunity you to come to find out about and share learning***

***Follow link to sign up: <https://events.weahsn.net/WestofEnglandPolypharmacy-CommunityofPractice6>***

*The***AHSN***Network*

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## **Find out more**

<https://www.weahsn.net/our-work/transforming-services-and-systems/polypharmacy/>



Multiple prescribing of anticoagulants and antiplatelet medicine

Percentage of patients prescribed 8 or more unique medicines

Percentage of patients prescribed 10 or more unique medicines

Percentage of patients prescribed 15 or more unique medicines

Percentage of patients prescribed 20 or more unique medicines

Percentage of patients prescribed a NSAID and one or more other unique medicines likely to cause kidney injury (DAMN medicines)

Percentage of patients prescribed two or more unique medicines likely to cause kidney injury (DAMN medicines)

Percentage of patients with an anticholinergic burden score of 6 or more

Percentage of patients with an anticholinergic burden score of 9 or more

Percentage of patients with an anticholinergic burden score of 12 or more

Percentage of patients prescribed 2 medicines with moderate to high anticholinergic burden

Percentage of patients prescribed 3 medicines with moderate to high anticholinergic burden

Percentage of patients prescribed 4 or more medicines with moderate to high anticholinergic burden

Percentage of patients prescribed 4 medicines with low to moderate anticholinergic burden

Percentage of patients prescribed 5 medicines with low to moderate anticholinergic burden

Percentage of patients prescribed 6 or more medicines with low to moderate anticholinergic burden

Percentage of patients concurrently prescribed 5 or more analgesic medicines

Percentage of patients prescribed 2 medicines that can have an unintended hypotensive effect

Percentage of patients prescribed 3 medicines that can have an unintended hypotensive effect

Percentage of patients prescribed 4 or more medicines that can have an unintended hypotensive effect

Percentage of patients prescribed a SSRI or a SNRI concurrently with 2 other medicines known to increase the risk of bleeding

Percentage of patients prescribed a SSRI or a SNRI concurrently with 3 other medicines known to increase the risk of bleeding

Percentage of patients prescribed a SSRI or a SNRI concurrently with 4 or more other medicines known to increase the risk of bleeding