

## Best practice guidance on the sale of medicines for pain relief

- Don't sell more than two packs in any one transaction
- Don't use offers that encourage the sale of more than one pack

### What is best practice?

#### **Sales:**

Sales of medicines for pain relief should be restricted to a maximum of two packs in any one transaction.

#### **Explanation:**

This limit is a reasonable balance between meeting a customer's immediate need for pain relief while helping to minimise stockpiling and accidental or impulsive overdose.

Tools to implement this best practice include:

- Till bars to prevent purchase of more than two packs.
- Regular training for staff on the restrictions, the reason for them, and how to respond to customers who want to buy larger quantities.
- Notices on shelving for customers and in the payment area for staff to raise awareness.

#### **Offers:**

Promotional offers on medicines for pain relief should not directly encourage the purchase of more than one pack.

#### **Explanation:**

Multi-buy offers such as 'buy one get one free' or 'buy 2 for £xx' may encourage consumers to purchase more packs than they currently need. The customer may stockpile excess packs, which pose a danger for accidental or impulsive overdose.

Please note: This guidance does not prevent reduced price offers on single packs.

### **Why are these restrictions needed?**

Medicines for pain relief on general sale are effective and acceptably safe when used according to the label instructions. But there is evidence to show that people sometimes use large quantities of these medicines impulsively. Restricting the availability of pain relief medicines for purchase and in the home is effective in reducing the number of hospital admissions and deaths from accidental or impulsive overdose.

### **What does the law say?**

The maximum pack size for pain relief medicines in a general sale outlet is 16 tablets or capsules. A pharmacy may sell larger packs containing up to 32 tablets or capsules under the supervision of a pharmacist. It is illegal to sell more than 100 tablets or capsules of either paracetamol or aspirin in any one retail transaction.

### **Where can I get further advice and information?**

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has developed this guidance with stakeholders representing large and small retailers, pharmacists, trading standards offices and the pharmaceutical industry. It applies to all solid dose (oral tablet or capsule) medicines for pain relief sold without pharmacist supervision. Additional restrictions apply to certain products available only from pharmacies.

Further advice on these voluntary restrictions is available from your trade association, local trading standards office or from MHRA Customer Services at [info@mhra.gov.uk](mailto:info@mhra.gov.uk).

**MHRA**  
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