



Why is it important to you?

Pseudoephedrine and ephedrine are important P medicines which are used as decongestants. However, due to their potential for misuse, there are legal restrictions on the quantities which can be sold or supplied without prescription.

What is the potential for misuse?

Pseudoephedrine and ephedrine can be used in the illicit production of a class A controlled drug methylamphetamine (crystal meth).

What will this guidance tell you?

This guidance explains the legal restrictions on the sale and supply of products containing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine and provides guidance on spotting signs of misuse and reporting this to the relevant authorities.

Can I sell or supply pseudoephedrine or ephedrine products?

Yes – however you need to bear in mind the legal restrictions on the maximum quantity of pseudoephedrine (720mg) and ephedrine (180mg) that can be sold, and the restriction against selling the two medicines together in a single transaction (Regulation 237 of Human Medicines Regulations 2012).

You also need to be aware of suspicious requests even if these fall within the legal limits.

Do pharmacy staff need to undergo training prior to selling or supplying pseudoephedrine or ephedrine?

Yes, the sale or supply of pseudoephedrine or ephedrine should either be made personally by the pharmacist or by pharmacy staff who have been trained on pseudoephedrine and ephedrine issues, knowing when to refer to the pharmacist where necessary.

LOOK and LISTEN for possible signs of misuse.

- Nervous or guilty behaviour – avoiding eye contact, person appears uncomfortable answering questions, unusually timid.
- Lack of symptoms – customer is not suffering from cough, cold and flu symptoms or unable to describe these in the patient if buying for someone else.
- Rehearsed answers – gives answers which appear to be rehearsed or scripted
- Impatient or aggressive – in a rush or hurry to complete the transaction
- Opportunistic – waiting for busy periods in the shop or until less experienced staff are available
- Specific products – wants certain brands, those that contain only pseudoephedrine or ephedrine
- Paraphernalia – wishes also to purchase other items which can be used to manufacture methylamphetamine (e.g. lithium batteries and chemicals such as acetone)
- Quantities - requests for large quantities
- Frequency - frequent requests

Remember: The people purchasing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine for illicit purposes may not be 'users' of methylamphetamine and therefore may not conform to stereotypes. They may be male, female and of any age or background.

How do I REPORT my suspicions?

Contact your local GPhC inspector on 020 3365 3400 or your local controlled drugs liaison police officer.

KEY POINTS

- It is unlawful to supply a product or combination of products which contain more than 720mg of pseudoephedrine OR 180mg of ephedrine in a single transaction, without a prescription.
- It is unlawful to sell or supply any pseudoephedrine product together with an ephedrine product without a prescription.
- Sale or supplies should either be made personally by the pharmacist or by pharmacy staff who have been trained on pseudoephedrine and ephedrine issues, knowing when to refer to the pharmacist where necessary.
- Even when a request is made for a lawful quantity, the sale or supply can be refused where there are reasonable grounds for suspecting misuse.
- Be vigilant for signs of misuse.

Where to go for more information

RPS Support: 0845 257 2570

Email: support@rpharms.com

Online: www.rpharms.com/enquiry

MHRA: www.mhra.gov.uk

NPA: www.npa.co.uk (restricted to NPA members)