

Willington Medical Group's approach to new patients taking prescribed Controlled Drugs

Document B2

This information has been written to explain to patients what the practice's approach is to the prescribing of controlled drugs.

Background

Over the past 10-20 years it has become clear that "controlled drugs" (including opioids (morphine-based drugs), gabapentin, pregabalin & sleeping medication eg Temazepam) are not the safe and effective treatment for long term, non-cancer pain or sleep problems that was originally thought.

As well as the risk of addiction, long-term use can lead to medical problems such as:

- Constipation
- Nausea
- Mental function (memory & concentration)
- Hormone function (sexual function, depression, hot flushes)
- Reduced immune function
- Balance issues
- Breathing and lung issues, especially at night

Some more information can be found at <https://www.ouh.nhs.uk/media/iotkzynl/95275opioids.pdf>

Willington Medical Group is working with patients who are on long-term controlled drugs, including opioid prescriptions, to safely manage and support their pain or symptoms with reduced and alternative medications **where possible and appropriate**.

New Patients

There are now significant concerns about the prescribing of "controlled drugs", also known as 'drugs of dependence' (e.g. opioids, gabapentinoids and benzodiazepines) due to the problems they can cause, outlined above.

Due to the long term health risks these drugs can cause, and concerns about the abuse and diversion of controlled prescription drugs, Willington Medical Group has established a policy to ensure adequate treatment of your condition, while reducing the risk of problems these drug prescriptions may cause.

If you become a new patient at Willington Medical and are taking prescribed controlled drugs:

- Please be aware of our policy to support safer, reduced prescribing of controlled drugs. See our separate information about **what we can offer** to help you manage pain and reduce your use of medication.

- Be aware that a member of the practice Pharmacy team will review your prescription soon after you register.
- Once registered, it may take time to get accurate medical information about your condition. Until such information is available, your GP may choose not to prescribe any medication. **It is our policy that GPs do not prescribe controlled drugs until they have a full clinical picture of the condition for which they are prescribed.**
- **Your GP may decide not to continue prescribing a controlled drug previously prescribed for you.** It may be determined that such a medication is not safe or suitable. It is our policy that GPs do not prescribe drugs of dependence if they think that previous prescriptions are now inappropriate.
- Your GP will evaluate your condition and only prescribe an opioid (or other medication listed above) of the strength necessary for you. **This may be different to the drug you were prescribed at your previous GP Practice.**

The clinical team at Willington Medical Group includes GPs, Nurse Practitioners & Pharmacists who work together to support patients. They aim to promote your wellbeing and safety. At times their approach to support reduced and safer prescribing may be difficult for you. Please work with our staff and help us to help you. Please treat our staff with politeness and respect as they seek to help you.

Patients are reminded that we have a zero tolerance approach on issues relating to staff abuse.

<https://www.willingtonmedicalgroup.nhs.uk/about-us/our-policies/18>

Current Patients

The practice is reviewing current patients who have controlled drugs on repeat prescription to work with them to support a safe reduction and stopping of these medications, as is clinically appropriate. We will discuss alternative safe and effective management of their chronic pain, which will include an offer of a referral to the local pain team.

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