Our Ref:  Free Text Prompt

Short date letter merged

Title Initial Last Name

Home Full Address (stacked)

Dear Title Surname

We are writing to you with respect to your opioid prescription for Free Text Prompt

Over the past 10-15 years it has become clear that opioids are not the safe and effective treatment for chronic (lasting more than a few months) non-cancer pain that was first thought. We now know that, although opioids are good at reducing short term pain and pain in terminally ill patients, there is little evidence that opioids taken long-term help to reduce pain in patients with persistent non-cancer pain nor improve the quality of their life and how daily activities are carried out. There is now a better understanding of the risks, including:

* reduced fertility
* low sex drive
* irregular periods
* erectile dysfunction in men (the inability to keep an erection)
* reduced ability to fight infection
* increased levels of pain
* dependence (if you use stop taking or lower the dose too quickly you can get symptoms of withdrawal).
* breathing issues (respiratory depression)
* opioid-related deaths.

We are starting to reduce our patients who are on long-term painkillers and we would like to offer support for you to reduce the amount you take. This is particularly for individuals who are taking more than what is now considered to be a safe amount of opioid for chronic pain.

Please could you make an appointment to discuss this with your GP? We realise that you may have concerns about this medicine stopping, however we ask that you consider the information we have provided very carefully and be prepared to try and reduce your opioid use.

It is important these medicines are not stopped abruptly which can result in withdrawal side effects so this medicine will need to be reduced gradually over a period of time.

We look forward to seeing you to discuss your reduction and if necessary alternative management for your pain.

If we haven’t heard from you within 3 months then the doctor managing your medicines may find it necessary to consider an active reduction of your dose, particularly for patients prescribed higher than what is now considered to be a safe amount of opioid for chronic pain.

Yours sincerely

The GPs at

British Pain Society Understanding and Managing Long-term Pain:

<https://www.britishpainsociety.org/static/uploads/resources/files/book_understanding_pain.pdf> (you can request a free hard copy by contacting the secretariat, leaving a postal address on 0207 269 7840 or emailing it to info@britishpainsociety.org).