

Access to codeine based medicine changed

From the 1st February 2018 all medicines containing Codeine will require a prescription and will not be available over the counter at pharmacies.

Northern District Community Health CEO Mandy Hutchinson said she wanted the community to be aware of this pending change and encouraged people who may be very reliant, often with daily use, on these codeine based products to seek support prior to February. Ms. Hutchinson said coordinating support with community members affected in collaboration with their GP's is the best way forward.

The medicines affected include Codeine-containing combination analgesics, available under brand names such as Panadeine, Nurofen Plus and Mersyndol and any pharmacy generic pain relief products. Also any Codeine-containing cough, cold and flu pharmacy generic medicines or those under brand names such as Codral or Demazin. This change has come from the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods due to the high risk of death from Codeine misuse versus the effectiveness of the medication. Studies have shown that current low dose Codeine products over the counter offer little additional pain relief when compared to other medicines, and Paracetamol and Ibuprofen combinations such as Nuromol or Maxigesic are just as effective for acute short term pain without the risk of creating dependence.

Chronic pain is defined as persistent daily pain for 3 months or more, and 1 in 5 Australians live with it. Websites like 'Pain Australia' and 'Chronic Pain Australia' may be helpful to review for multidisciplinary pain relief strategies rather than just using medication. Chronic pain should be managed with your GP and specialist regional pain management clinics are an option.

Ms. Hutchinson said NDCH is a supportive first point of call to support someone who is dependent on a Codeine medication and may need some assistance to withdraw from it, 'pharmacotherapy support is often a vital component of withdrawal', she said.

As would be expected local pharmacies, Cohuna Amcal, Barham Chemmart, Boort Community Pharmacy and Terry White Pharmacy are vital points of information for community members who may be impacted by this change and all pharmacies have information and support service details on hand.

If you need to talk to someone about this you can contact Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO) on 1300 022 760 or speak to Rural Withdrawal Nurses, Claire or Leah at NDCH on 5451 0200 for more information and support.

Date: 3 January 2018

Media contact; Claire Gillen T. 03 5451 0200

References available if required.