

From the Chief Medical Officer  
Dr Michael McBride

**URGENT COMMUNICATION**

**HSS(MD)39/2009**

All General Practitioners  
Family Practitioner Service Leads HSC Board (*for  
distribution to GP Out of Hours services*)  
GP Medical Advisers, HSC Board



Department of  
**Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety**

[www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)

AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta  
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÄNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin  
an Fowk Siccar**

Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast BT4 3SQ  
Tel: 028 9052 0563  
Fax: 028 9052 0574  
Email: [michael.mcbride@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:michael.mcbride@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

Your Ref:  
Our Ref: HSS(MD)39/2009  
Date: 4 September 2009

Dear Colleagues

**UPDATED ADVICE ON NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES CONTAINING CODEINE OR  
DIHYDROCODEINE (DHC)**

The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland has advised pharmacists of an MHRA circular on non prescription medicines containing codeine or dihydrocodeine. The circular provides information on new warnings and tighter controls on the sales of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines containing codeine or DHC that are being introduced to minimise the risk of overuse and addiction to these medicines in line with recent advice from the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM).

Packs containing more than 32 tablets of effervescent codeine containing products will no longer be sold in the pharmacy but will be available on prescription. All packs containing up to 32 tablets remain available for sale through a pharmacy.

These changes are being introduced over the next 3-6 months to minimise risk to the public, meanwhile existing product and packs can be sold through by pharmacies exercising full professional judgement.

Further information is available at <http://www.mhra.gov.uk/index.htm>

**Dr Michael McBride  
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER**

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