

Suicide prevention awareness: Retailers' legal obligations when selling paracetamol

Non-pharmacy retailers can sell only one pack of a paracetamol product per retail transaction

In 2015, the Government launched 'Connecting for Life', the new national strategy to reduce suicide (2015-2020). It lists seven main goals, one of which includes reducing access to medicines that are most frequently used in intentional drug overdoses. Paracetamol is, unfortunately, one such medicine, a situation that highlights the importance of the **responsible selling** of paracetamol containing medicines by retailers. The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) is reminding retailers of the need to adhere to the legal requirements with respect to selling paracetamol and to ensure that all staff are aware of the restrictions that apply.

The legal requirements

It is a legal requirement* that non-pharmacy retailers may only sell one pack of a medicine containing paracetamol per retail transaction. Accordingly, retailers need to exercise vigilance in respect of customers trying to obtain two or more packs of paracetamol containing products. This includes where a customer attempts to purchase two different brands of paracetamol containing medicines.

The HPRA advises retailers to:

- Ensure all staff are aware that only **one pack** of a medicine containing paracetamol may be sold to a customer per transaction and that this is emphasised in all training for future new staff. It is important for staff to understand that sticking to the requirement **may help to save lives**.
- Use signage to remind staff that only one pack of a medicine containing paracetamol can be sold per transaction.
- Identify all products that contain paracetamol and ensure **restrictions are in place** so that only one pack of a medicine containing paracetamol can be sold per transaction.
- Ensure that all staff are **vigilant** for customers attempting to purchase different brands of medicines containing paracetamol.
- Have an **alert** on the cash register to signal to staff that the product scanned contains paracetamol and, therefore, only one pack may be sold per transaction.
- Implement '**a block**' at the cash register and self-service tills that does not allow two packs of medicines containing paracetamol to be scanned/sold in one transaction.
- Emphasise to staff that it is not acceptable to bypass the requirement by selling more than one pack to a single customer by carrying out a second, separate, transaction.

What to expect:

The HPRA will be carrying out spot checks across Ireland to monitor compliance with the legal requirements controlling the sale of paracetamol in non-pharmacy retailers. Failure to comply with this or other legal requirements relating to medicines may result in prosecution.

About the HPRA

The role of the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) is to protect and enhance public and animal health by regulating medicines, medical devices and other health products, including cosmetics. Information about the HPRA is available online at www.hpra.ie. The HPRA was previously known as the Irish Medicines Board (IMB).

**The above restrictions are required under the Medicinal Products (Prescription and Control of Supply) Regulations 2003, S.I. 540 of 2003, as amended.*