



For immediate release: 3 September 2009, 10am

Industry supports changes to information about over-the-counter products containing codeine

PAGB, the trade association representing manufacturers of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, supports the proposed changes to how information is provided about OTC products containing codeine. This includes moving the addiction warning to the front of the pack and adding the warning to advertising.

Sheila Kelly, PAGB Executive Director, comments: "Safety is of paramount concern to the industry and manufacturers are fully supportive of this new package of measures for over-the-counter products containing codeine."

"PAGB member companies already voluntarily restricted pack sizes to 32 tablets and added addiction warnings to packs back in 2005. The new labelling to increase the prominence of the addiction warning by moving it to the front of the pack, and to limit the indications to moderate acute pain that does not respond to paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin alone, will be introduced as soon as possible."

"There is very little advertising for products containing codeine but we will immediately update our Medicines Advertising Code¹ to ensure the addiction warning is included in any new advertisements."

"Painkillers containing codeine are very effective for short term pain relief and are safe when used according to the instructions. Combining codeine with paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin produces stronger pain relief which is particularly effective for ailments such as migraine, backache, dental pain and period pain. The vast majority of people use codeine containing products correctly and have no need to worry that they are doing themselves any harm."

For many years, the industry has worked closely with stakeholders including government, pharmacists and codeine charities to find an approach that discourages the misuse of products containing codeine, without penalising the millions of people who benefit from safe and effective pain relief by using products as intended.



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Notes to editors:

Proprietary Association of Great Britain (PAGB) is the UK trade association representing over-the-counter medicines and food supplement manufacturers.

A product list and Q&A about OTC medicines containing codeine is also available.

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¹ PAGB operates a pre-publication approval system for consumer advertising, checking it for compliance against the PAGB Medicines Advertising Codes, to ensure it is responsible and not misleading.