



The Consumer Healthcare Association

18 August 2020

PAGB responds to MHRA review of stimulant laxatives

In response to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) review of stimulant laxatives, PAGB Chief Executive, Michelle Riddalls, said: “Manufacturers of over-the-counter medicines prioritise safety above all else. Our members were very concerned by the reports of misuse of stimulant laxatives which prompted the review and they have worked closely with the MHRA to address this issue.

“As a result of the review, the following measures will come into effect:

- new warnings will appear on packs, clearly stating that ‘overuse can be harmful’;
- over-18s will still be able to buy stimulant laxatives over the counter from pharmacies, supermarkets and other retailers;
- the sale of stimulant laxatives to 12 to 18-year-olds will be permitted only under the supervision of a pharmacist;
- no-one will be allowed to buy stimulant laxatives for use by children under 12 - these will now only be available with advice from a prescriber such as a GP;
- the amount of stimulant laxative which can be bought over-the-counter either in tablet or liquid form will be capped at two treatment courses, although larger packs will still be available if sold under the supervision of a pharmacist;
- educational information will be sent to pharmacists to ensure they have up-to-date information on these products and their supply.

“We are pleased the MHRA review has concluded that these products will continue to be available as a self care option for people experiencing constipation, a problem which affects around 9% of the UK population.

“The majority of people who use these products take them safely and appropriately to provide effective short-term relief from constipation. However, we fully support the MHRA’s focus on ensuring that consumers who choose stimulant laxatives have all the information they need to use them responsibly and safely.

“Anyone using these products should always read the label and take them according to instructions on the packaging. A pharmacist can offer advice if people have any concerns.”

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Notes to editors:

PAGB, the consumer healthcare association, represents the manufacturers of branded OTC medicines, self care medical devices and food supplements in the UK.

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