

Malta, 28 March 2008

Circular No. P04/2008

## **Re: Over-the-counter cough and cold medicines for children**

Following recent reports in the national and international media regarding the use of over-the-counter cough and cold medicines for children, the Medicines Authority is issuing this circular to provide information and advice to patients with regards to this issue.

In the United Kingdom, where a review of the use of cough and cold medicines<sup>1</sup> has been recently finalised, medicines are not only sold under pharmacist supervision from a pharmacy (as currently available in Malta), but also from other retail outlets such as supermarkets and convenience stores. Due to this difference in medication availability, the recent withdrawal of certain cough and cold medicines from the UK market is not considered applicable to Malta. The Medicines Authority would, however, like to stress that although a doctor's prescription is not required to obtain these medicines, under no circumstances should such cough and cold medicines be given to children **under the age of two** unless prescribed by a doctor. For children **older than 2 years**, cough and cold medicines are considered safe at the recommended doses, which should be followed carefully and not exceeded. Furthermore, parents and carers are advised not to give a child more than one cough and cold medicine at the same time since different brands may contain the same ingredient(s), and if required, the advice of the pharmacist and/or doctor should be sought.

In conclusion, the Medicines Authority would like to reassure the general public that these products remain safe in children older than two years. The Medicines Authority will notify both healthcare professionals and patients alike in a timely fashion as new information become available.

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<sup>1</sup> The review was carried out on medicines containing the following active ingredients: Brompheniramine, chlorpheniramine, and diphenhydramine (antihistamines); dextromethorphan and pholcodine (antitussives); guaifenesin and ipecacuanha (expectorants); phenylephrine, pseudoephedrine, ephedrine, oxymetazoline and xylometazoline (decongestants)