

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY R.G. LE HÉRISSEIER OF ST. SAVIOUR
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 10th MARCH 2009**

Question

Following his recent response to questions on 24th February 2009, would the Minister confirm if Asprin as prescribed by a GP is different to Asprin bought 'over the counter' and, if so, how ?

Answer

Aspirin 300 mg and 75 mg are medicines which are available to purchase without prescription or "over the counter". They may also be prescribed by a GP as they are approved medicines and therefore attract pharmaceutical benefit under the Health Insurance (Jersey) Law 1967. The inclusion of over the counter medicines on the Health Insurance Formulary provides doctors with the necessary flexibility to prescribe all relevant medicines for a person's medical conditions.

Aspirin 300mg (a non-opioid analgesia) is clinically indicated for mild to moderate pain and pyrexia as well as in the initial management of unstable angina. Aspirin 75 mg (an antiplatelet medicine) is clinically indicated for prophylaxis of cerebrovascular disease or myocardial infarction.

Whilst there is no difference in Aspirin prescribed by a doctor or Aspirin bought over the counter, there is a need to realise that over the counter medicine purchases of such items are not always appropriate and a prescription is required. The decision to prescribe Aspirin will depend on the person's medical condition; treatment duration and ability to manage medicines safely.

It is commonly believed that over the counter medicines are safe and carry little risk of side effects; however, all medicines (prescription only and over the counter) have side effects and there are risks as well as benefits in their use, particularly when used in conjunction with other medicines. In both doses of Aspirin, side effects such as gastro-intestinal haemorrhage may occur and there may also be detrimental interactions with other medicines. Therefore, the doctor may prescribe these medicines as part of the person's treatment plan. In particular, although many people will use Aspirin on an intermittent basis, to treat minor ailments, the long-term, regular use of any medicine, including Aspirin, should be monitored through a general practitioner.