

## Controlling medication risks with a new drug category – Finns want simple pain relief

Pharmacies are introducing a renewed over-the-counter, or OTC, medicines category. The first non-steroidal anti-inflammatory analgesic or NSAID in the category will be Orion Pronaxen 250mg (10 tablets) that until now has only been available on prescription in Finland. The types of medication Finns particularly want in the renewed category are those that alleviate pain and local inflammation. Controlling medication risks is another reason for the renewed drug category.

The Finnish Medicines Agency Fimea has approved a new OTC medicines category, OTC medication requiring additional advice. These include medicines which, when purchased, require active additional advice from the pharmacy staff when dispensing the product. Before handing over the product, the pharmacy staff ensure that the customer understands the instructions and has no illness or other medication that would prevent the use of the product in question. Products in the OTC category require no prescription.

There is strong demand for the new OTC category. According to a survey commissioned by Orion, over 70 percent of Finns between the ages 15 and 80 think that it would be a good idea if more medicines were available in pharmacies without a prescription but with a pharmacist's guidance. Finns particularly want non-prescription drugs for the treatment of migraines, menstrual pain as well as eye infections and urinary tract infections. In the survey, 35 percent of women wanted OTC drugs for urinary tract infections. The survey conducted by market research company Cint in November had 1,028 respondents.

"The OTC medicines category will help to better control any medication risks associated with self-help products. The customer will receive expert advice in choosing the right product in the pharmacy. If more products are added to the category in future, it will also lighten the load of the health care sector," says Orion's Medical Director Paula Ryttilä.

### Pharmacy staff to receive further training in the category's OTC products

The first NSAID in the category will be Orion Pronaxen 250mg. It provides long-lasting relief for inflammation, pain and fever, and can be used for the treatment of temporary pains such as toothache, headaches and muscular, joint and menstrual pain. A Finnish product, Pronaxen has so far only been available on prescription in Finland.

"Pronaxen's active ingredient is naproxen. Such products are sold over the counter in Sweden, for example, and experiences have been encouraging," says Paula Ryttilä.

Before Pronaxen, emergency contraception products have been available over the counter in this way in Finnish pharmacies. Good experiences have shown that pharmacy staff are already skilled in guiding OTC customers who need additional advice.

The Finnish Pharmacists' Association also believes the new category will be successful.

"We are, of course, very pleased that the competence of pharmacists will now be utilised even better than before. Our highly educated pharmacy experts can not only meet each customer individually and assess their needs but also refer them to a doctor if necessary," says Kirsi Kvarnström, President of the Finnish Pharmacists' Association.

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