

Reducing the environmental impact of medication

The role of the prescriber

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Medicines have a significant impact on our environment, contributing to ecological crises and posing threats to public health.













- **Indirectly:** Through their development, production, transport, usage, and waste processes (Life Cycle)
- **Directly:** By entering the environment and causing ecological effects

Within Dutch healthcare, chemical products, including pharmaceuticals, contribute to:



Therefore, medication represents an aspect of healthcare where sustainable measures could significantly reduce environmental impact

How can prescribers help reduce the environmental impact of medicines?

 Emphasize lifestyle advice and non-pharmacological therapies that reduce the need for medication	 Discourage unnecessary use of over-the-counter medication	 Do not prescribe unnecessary (without indication) medication
 Avoid prescribing 'as needed' medication if the patient is unlikely to use it	 Regularly optimize medication lists (deprescribing opportunities)	 Prescribe small quantities, especially for a first prescription, to minimize leftover medication
 Avoid medications with direct greenhouse gas emissions where possible (e.g. aerosol inhalers and anesthetic gases)	 When efficacy is equal, choose oral administration forms as they require less materials	 Always opt for (optimal dosing of) paracetamol before prescribing a NSAID (unless there is a specific indication)
 Advise patients to always return leftover medication to the pharmacy and never flush it down		 Always wipe off excess medication on the skin and dispose it in the trash instead of washing it off

Prescribers must also consider environmental impact for treatment choices with medicines, alongside effectiveness, safety, and costs. However, a lack of information hinders this. Further research and transparency are essential for informed 'green' prescribing choices.

The Erasmus+ project 'Planetary Health Education in Prescribing' (PlanED Prescribing) aims to integrate environmental sustainability considerations into prescribing education.



PlanED
Prescribing



Reference

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