

Press Release –
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Academy of Medical
Royal Colleges

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Forty treatments that bring little or no benefit to patients.

The Academy of Medical Royal colleges is today (Monday 24th October) launching its Choosing Wisely campaign, with a list of forty treatments and procedures that are of little or no benefit to patients. The list, which has been drawn up by the Academy's member royal colleges and faculties includes advice to both patients and doctors for treating health related issues such as:

- Cuts and grazes – Tap water is just as good for cleaning them as saline solution
- Lower back pain – X-rays are of little benefit if there are no other concerning features
- Terminal cancer – Chemotherapy may be used to relieve symptoms but can also be painful, cannot cure the disease and may well bring further distress in the final months of life
- Prostate conditions – Routine screening using a test known as a Prostate Specific Antigen, or PSA test does not lead to longer life and can bring unnecessary anxiety
- Small wrist fractures or 'buckle fractures' in children – Do not normally need a plaster cast, and will heal just as quickly with a removable splint.

The full list, which was drawn up by experts from eleven medical specialties as well as patient groups, can be viewed [here](#).

At the heart of the Choosing Wisely initiative is a call to both doctors and patients to have a fully informed conversation about the risks and benefits of treatments and procedures. As well as releasing resources for other activities, it says patients should always ask five key questions when seeking treatment. They are:

1. Do I really need this test, treatment or procedure?
2. What are the risks or downsides?
3. What are the possible side effects?
4. Are there simpler, safer options?
5. What will happen if I do nothing?

In a study carried out last year, 82% of doctors said they had prescribed or carried out a treatment which they knew to be unnecessary. The vast majority of this group cited patient pressure or patient expectation as the main reason. The campaign is part of a global initiative to reduce over-medicalisation. In the US for example, which launched Choosing Wisely three years ago, over 450 recommendations for treatments or procedures that are unlikely to be of benefit to patients are listed. The UK list will be added to annually.

Professor Dame Sue Bailey, Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges said, *'We all have a duty to look after resources in healthcare, especially when the NHS is under so much pressure, but that's not the main motivation for this initiative. What's much more important is that both doctors and patients really question whether the particular treatment is really necessary. Medicine or surgical interventions don't need to be the only solution offered by a doctor and more certainly doesn't always mean better'*. ENDS

Notes for editors

- Professor Dame Sue Bailey, Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges will be available to interview in Central London from early Monday morning. Dr David Warriner, the Academy's Clinical Fellow will also be available.
- The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, has been closely involved in drawing up the recommendations
- Each recommendation has been supplied from eleven medical royal colleges, which participated in the first wave of Choosing Wisely. Other colleges are expected to add to the list in the coming year
- For further information contact the Academy communications director, Max Prangnell on 0773 436 1055 or max.prangnell@aomrc.org.uk or the Choosing Wisely lead officer Joan Reid on 07971 731422 or joan.reid@aomrc.org.uk