



CONDITIONS FOR WHICH OVER THE COUNTER MEDICATIONS WILL NOT ROUTINELY BE PRESCRIBED

NHS England has issued guidance to help reduce the prescribing of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines for minor, short-term health concerns which could save the NHS millions of pounds a year and encourage more people to self-care.

These will include:-

- Treatments that can be purchased over the counter from a pharmacy with or without advice
- Treatments that can be purchased from other retail outlets such as supermarkets, petrol stations, convenience and discount stores
- Treatments that are used to treat a condition that is considered to be self-limiting and so does not need treatment as it will heal/resolve by itself; and/or
- Treatments that are used to treat a condition which lends itself to self-care i.e. that the person suffering does not normally need to seek medical care and/or treatment for the condition
- Treatments that are often available to purchase over the counter at a lower cost than would be incurred by the NHS on a prescription

Items of limited clinical effectiveness

- 1. Probiotics
- 2. Vitamins and minerals

Self-limiting conditions

A condition which is considered to be self-limiting and so does not need treatment as it will heal or be cured of its own accord;

A self-limiting condition is a condition which lends itself to self-care, i.e. that the person suffering does not normally need to seek medical advice but may decide to seek help from a local pharmacy for symptom relief and use an over the counter (OTC) medicine.

A self-limiting condition is also considered a condition for which there is little evidence of clinical effectiveness for prescribing medication which can be bought from a chemist without the need for a prescription.

1. Acute Sore Throat
2. Cold Sores
3. Conjunctivitis
4. Coughs and Colds and Nasal Congestion
5. Cradle Cap
6. Haemorrhoids
7. Infant Colic

Minor conditions suitable for self-care

1. Mild Cystitis
2. Contact Dermatitis
3. Dandruff
4. Diarrhoea (Adults)
5. Dry Eyes/Sore (tired) eyes
6. Earwax
7. Excessive sweating (mild – moderate hyperhidrosis)
8. Head Lice
9. Indigestion and Heartburn
10. Infrequent Constipation
11. Infrequent Migraines
12. Insect bites and stings
13. Mild Acne
14. Mild Dry Skin
15. Sunburn/Sun Protection
16. Mild to Moderate Hay fever/Seasonal Rhinitis
17. Minor Burns and Scalds
18. Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and/fever. (e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain)
19. Mouth Ulcers

20. Nappy Rash
21. Prevention of dental caries
22. Ringworm/Athletes foot
23. Teething/Mild Toothache
24. Threadworms
25. Travel Sickness Tablets
26. Warts and Verrucae

There is a wide range of information available to the public on the subjects of health promotion and the management of minor self-treatable illnesses. Advice from organisations such as the Self Care Forum and NHS Choices is readily available on the internet. Many community pharmacies are also open extended hours including weekends and are ideally placed to offer advice on the management of minor ailments and lifestyle interventions. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society offers advice on over the counter products that should be kept in a medicine cabinet at home to help patients treat a range of self-treatable illnesses.

General exceptions that apply to the recommendation to self-care

The guidance is intended to encourage people to self-care for minor illnesses as the first stage treatment. It is envisioned that in most cases (unless specified) these minor conditions will clear up with appropriate self-care.

If symptoms are not improving or responding to treatment, then patients should be encouraged to seek further advice.

The guidance is not intended to discourage patients from going to the GP when it is appropriate to do so.

There are however, certain scenarios where patients should continue to have their treatments prescribed and these are outlined as follows:

- Patients prescribed an OTC treatment for a long term condition (e.g. regular pain relief for chronic arthritis or treatments for inflammatory bowel disease).
- For the treatment of more complex forms of minor illnesses (e.g. severe migraines that are unresponsive to over the counter medicines).

- For those patients that have symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor (i.e. those with red flag symptoms for example indigestion with very bad pain).
- Treatment for complex patients (e.g. immunosuppressed patients).
- Patients on prescription only treatments.
- Patients prescribed OTC products to treat an adverse effect or symptom of a more complex illness and/or prescription only medications should continue to have these products prescribed on the NHS.
- Circumstances where the product licence doesn't allow the product to be sold over the counter to certain groups of patients. This may vary by medicine, but could include babies, children and/or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Community Pharmacists will be aware of what these are and can advise accordingly.
- Patients with a minor condition suitable for self-care that has not responded sufficiently to treatment with an OTC product.
- Patients where the clinician considers that the presenting symptom is due to a condition that would not be considered a minor condition.
- Circumstances where the prescriber believes that in their clinical judgement, exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the recommendation to self-care.
- Individual patients where the clinician considers that their ability to self-manage is compromised as a consequence of medical, mental health or significant social vulnerability to the extent that their health and/or wellbeing could be adversely affected, if reliant on self-care. To note that being exempt from paying a prescription charge does not automatically warrant an exception to the guidance. Consideration should also be given to safeguarding issues.

Full guidance can be found at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs/>