

Policy on Prescribing of Medicines that are Available for Purchase (Self-Care)

Funding of medicines available to purchase to treat self-limiting conditions and minor ailments and self-care is a personal responsibility.

It is expected that patients will purchase such medicines, (see table 1 for examples), after seeking appropriate advice from a community pharmacist or other healthcare professional.

All patients, regardless of where they live, should be able to access and purchase such medicines.

There is a range of resources for advice on medicines use, e.g. community pharmacists, NHS 111, which can be used to enable self-care before seeking advice from a GP or a Nurse.

Individuals are expected, where possible, to try to alter their diet and life-style if it is probable that this is the cause of a minor health problem, e.g. dyspepsia.

Medicines can be purchased over the counter (OTC) from community pharmacies and/or supermarkets. These often have extended opening times therefore allowing rapid access and early treatment, rather than delaying treatment by attending a GP appointment for a prescription. The range of medicines available increases regularly and a community pharmacist would be best placed to give advice on the most appropriate product to use. Many minor ailments are not of a serious nature and will resolve within a short time-frame without the need for treatment.

Community Pharmacists are able to advise and signpost patients in situations where they should seek medical advice.

Community pharmacists should not advise patients to request their GP to prescribe medicines available for self-limiting conditions and minor health problems where these are available to purchase.

If patients are regularly using OTC medicines for a long term condition e.g. Regular full dose paracetamol for chronic pain, it would not be unreasonable to prescribe.

It is important to check that the OTC medicine is licensed for the indication that it is to be used for and not contraindicated or restricted for OTC use, otherwise requests for purchasing OTC medicines for unlicensed indications will be refused by community pharmacies. See table 2 for common OTC medications, the conditions for which they are used for and OTC restrictions.

Table 1: Medications for minor ailments and self-limiting conditions which should be purchased seek advice from community pharmacists

- Pain killers for acute minor aches and pains including migraine and minor temperature e.g. paracetamol
- Treatment of coughs and colds including cough syrup, nasal drops & inhalations
- Treating one-off/non serious constipation and/or diarrhoea
- Treatments for haemorrhoids
- Hay fever preparations
- Allergy preparations for non-serious stings and insect bites and eye drops for allergies
- Eye drops for minor eye infections, dry eye conditions
- Treatment for occurrences of head-lice infestation, Head lice lotions and shampoos
- Treatment of occasional bouts of dyspepsia
- Treatment of oral or vaginal thrush
- Treatment of cystitis
- Antiperspirants
- Athlete's foot cream and powders
- Topical fungal nail treatments
- Barrier creams for nappy rash
- Creams or gels for:
 - dry skin conditions
 - female facial hair removal
 - minor acne
 - sprains and sports injuries
 - bruising, scars, tattoos and varicose veins.
 - minor abrasions or irritated skin – (antiseptic creams)
 - sun screens – unless treatment according to the policy on sunscreens
- Tubigrip/plasters/bandages for sprains and sports injuries
- Ear wax removers and softeners
- Food e.g. gluten free foods, sip feeds/oral nutritional supplements, Soya milk
- Toiletries
- Inhaler aids
- Lozenges, throat sprays, mouthwashes and gargles
- Moisturisers & bath additives for minor dry skin conditions
- Slimming preparations other than those restricted to prescription only
- Threadworm and roundworm tablets
- Tonics, vitamins, health supplements and complementary medicines
- Travel medicines e.g. for travel sickness and vaccines