

**COASTAL WEST SUSSEX AREA PRESCRIBING COMMITTEE
POSITION STATEMENT**

Name of guidance	Conditions for which over-the-counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care.
Statement number	CWSAPC 08
Document version	V1.0
Date ratified at APC	18 th July 2018
Date of Review	July 2020

NHS England published its final guidance in March 2018; “Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care” following a public consultation on the prescribing of over the counter (OTC) medicines. It is estimated that this new guidance could release as much as £136 million across England each year to reinvest in other services. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/medicines/conditions-for-which-over%20-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed/>

NHS Coastal West Sussex (CWS) CCG is committed to delivering best value by ensuring that we use our resources well. Therefore to help us to support the cost effective, evidence based use of medicines the CCG no longer supports the routine prescribing of health supplements and medications that can be bought OTC from community pharmacies for self-limiting, short-term illnesses and minor conditions or where there is limited evidence of clinical effectiveness in line with the NHS England guidance. People who receive free prescriptions will not automatically be exempt from the guidance.

What has changed?

The new guidance recommends that, for 35 minor (Appendix 1), short-term conditions, medicines which are available OTC are no longer routinely prescribed, which are either ‘self-limiting’, suitable for ‘self-care’ or items of ‘limited clinical effectiveness’.

1. **A self-limiting condition** does not require any medical advice or treatment as it will clear up on its own, such as sore throats, coughs, colds and viruses.

2. **A minor illness** that is suitable for self-care can be treated with items that can be purchased OTC from a pharmacy. These conditions include, for example, indigestion, mouth ulcers and warts and verrucae.

There are legal restrictions in place usually relating to age, indication, duration of use and quantity when P (pharmacy) medicines are sold OTC. Prescribers must be mindful that they don’t recommend purchase of a medicine if the restriction is relevant to that individual. It is the responsibility of the health care professional prescribing, recommending or supplying a medicine, to ensure that no contraindications apply. If prescribers advise a patient to purchase medication to relieve symptoms, they can use appendix 3 ‘Referral to local pharmacy – no prescription required’ form. This will reduce the risk of any miscommunication between the patient and the community pharmacist.

3. **Limited clinical effectiveness** is also included in the guidance which includes vitamins, minerals and probiotics.

Why are we doing this?

By reducing spend on treating minor conditions that are self-limiting or which lend themselves to self-care, these resources can be used for other higher priority areas that have a greater benefit to patient and support improvements in services. For example;

- To encourage and empower people to self-care for minor self-limiting conditions, short-term illnesses, minor conditions or where there is little evidence of clinical effectiveness, at home with support from community pharmacies therefore reducing reliance on prescribers for prescriptions. This in turn will ease the pressure on NHS prescribing budgets.
- Free up GP consultation time for people who have more complex healthcare needs and who need more active support in managing their health.

Who is affected by the change?

CWS CCG have adopted the new guidance locally, it will apply to everyone who is not covered by the general or condition-specific exceptions listed in Appendix 2.

In relation to the exceptions, it is important to highlight:

- The guidance does not apply to people with long-term or more complex conditions who will continue to get their usual prescriptions.
- People who receive free prescriptions will not automatically be exempt from the guidance.
- For patients where the clinician considers that their ability to self-manage is compromised as a consequence of medical, mental health or significant social vulnerability; these patients will continue to receive prescriptions for OTC items subject to the item being clinically effective.

Promoting self-care for self-limiting illnesses

Healthcare professionals can help to empower patients to self-care by:

- Sign posting patients to the most up to date information on the NHS choices website which also gives advice on when symptoms are likely to be of a more serious nature and to seek advice from a GP.
- Educating patients at the point of care for future reference.
- Ensuring all GP practice staff is aware of the local guidance and materials to support self-care.
- Liaising with the local community pharmacy to ensure that patients are receiving standardised advice.

Appendix 1

The conditions and associated medicines listed below are examples of those that can be self-managed and medicines should be purchased by the patient/parent/carer.

This list is not exhaustive and general exceptions to this policy are listed in Appendix 2.

Items of limited clinical effectiveness	
These items should not be routinely prescribed in primary care due to limited evidence of clinical effectiveness	
Items	Specific exceptions / when to see a GP
Probiotics e.g. sachets, liquid acidophilus, (Actimel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACBS approved indication only.
Vitamins and minerals e.g. maintenance dose vitamin D, vitamin C, multivitamins, zinc, cod liver oil, (I-Caps [®] , Berocca [®] , Sanatogen [®] A-Z complete, Seven Seas [®])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medically diagnosed deficiency, including for those patients who may have a lifelong or chronic condition. Continuing need should however be reviewed on a regular basis. * Maintenance or preventative treatment is not an exception.* Calcium and vitamin D for osteoporosis Malnutrition including alcoholism (see NICE guidance) Patients suitable to receive Healthy Start vitamins for pregnancy or children between the ages of 6 months to their fourth birthday (this is not on prescription but commissioned separately).
Self-limiting conditions	
A prescription for treatment of these conditions should not routinely be offered in primary care, as the condition is self-limiting and will clear up on its own without the need for treatment	
Items	Specific exceptions / when to see a GP
Acute sore throat e.g. sprays / lozenges / pastilles / mouthwashes, benzocaine, (Difflam [®] , Strepsils [®])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Red flag' symptoms.
Cold sores e.g. antiviral lip creams, aciclovir cream, (Blistex [®] , Zovirax [®])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immunocompromised patients. 'Red flag' symptoms.
Conjunctivitis e.g. Antimicrobial eye drops / ointment, chloramphenicol (patients who are 2 years old and over), sodium cromoglicate eye drops, (Golden eye [®] , Brolene [®])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Red flag' symptoms.

Self-limiting conditions	
A prescription for treatment of these conditions should not routinely be offered in primary care, as the condition is self-limiting and will clear up on its own without the need for treatment	
Cough, colds, nasal congestion, allergic rhinitis and sinusitis e.g. cough mixtures/linctus, saline nasal drops/douches, decongestant nasal sprays, menthol vapour rubs, cold and flu capsules/sachets, (Lemsip [®] , Benylin [®] , Sudafed, Beechams, Vicks, Sterimar, NeilMed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Red flag' symptoms.
Cradle cap e.g. emulsifying ointment, shampoos, baby oils, (Capasal [®] shampoo, Dentinox [®] shampoo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If causing distress to the infant and not improving.
Haemorrhoids e.g. zinc oxide ointments/creams/ointment (Anusol [®] , Germoloids [®])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Red flag' symptoms.
Infant Colic e.g. gripe water, simethicone drops, lactase drops (Infacol [®] , Colief [®])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Red flag' symptoms.
Mild cystitis e.g. potassium citrate, sodium citrate, sodium bicarbonate sachets/mix (Cymaclear [®] liquid, Cystopurin [®] sachets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Red flag' symptoms.
Minor Conditions Suitable for Self-Care	
A prescription for treatment of these conditions should not routinely be offered in primary care as the condition is appropriate for self-care.	
Items	Specific exceptions / when to see a GP
Mild irritant dermatitis e.g. emollients, steroid (allergy/itch) relief cream, hydrocortisone cream/ointment (ExoCream [®] , Eurax cream [®])	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Dandruff e.g. antidandruff/antifungal shampoos, coal tar shampoo, ketoconazole shampoo (Alphosyl [®] , Capasal [®] , T-Gel [®] , Nizoral)	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Diarrhoea (adults only) e.g. loperamide, rehydration sachets (Imodium [®] , Dioralyte [®])	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Dry eye/sore tired eyes e.g. lubricating eye drops, artificial tears, hypromellose, carbomer eye drops (GelTears [®] , Optrex [®])	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Ear wax e.g. olive oil/almond oil, hydrogen peroxide, sodium bicarbonate ear drops (Earex [®] , Otex [®])	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis) e.g. antiperspirants, aluminium chloride sprays/roll-on/solution (DriClor [®] , Anhydrol Forte [®] , Zeasorb [®] powder)	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.

Minor Conditions Suitable for Self-Care

A prescription for treatment of these conditions should not routinely be offered in primary care as the condition is appropriate for self-care.

Head lice e.g. dimeticone lotions/creams, nit combs, (Lyclear [®] , Permethrin [®] , Hedrin [®] , Derbac-M [®] , Full Marks [®])	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Indigestion and heartburn e.g. antacid tablets/liquid, peppermint oil capsules, sodium alginate, calcium carbonate, potassium bicarbonate, sodium bicarbonate (Gavison [®] , Peptac [®] , Rennie [®])	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Infrequent constipation e.g. laxative tablets/liquid/suppositories/granules, bisacodyl, docusate, senna, lactulose (Fybogel [®])	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Infrequent migraine e.g. migraine tablets, anti-sickness tablet (Buccastem M [®] , Migraleve [®])	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Insect bites and stings e.g. steroid and anti-itch creams, calamine lotion, insect repellent (Anthisan [®] cream)	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Mild Acne e.g. Benzoyl peroxide gel/wash, salicylic products, (PanOxyl [®])	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Mild dry skin e.g. emollients, moisturising cream/gels/ointments/bath additives/shower gels (E45 [®] , Aveeno [®] , Oilatum [®] , Elena's [®])	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Sunburn due to excessive sun exposure e.g. after sun, aloe vera gel	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
Sun protection e.g. sunscreen cream/lotion/spray/lip balm (Sunsense [®] , Uvistat [®])	ACBS approved indication of photodermatoses (i.e. where skin protection should be prescribed) General exception (appendix 2)
Mild to moderate hay fever/seasonal rhinitis e.g. antihistamine tablets/eye drops/liquid, steroid nasal sprays, cetirizine, chlorphenamine, loratidine, sodium cromoglicate (Beconase [®] , Benadryl [®] , Clarityn [®] , Opticrom [®] , Piriton [®])	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.

Minor Conditions Suitable for Self-Care

A prescription for treatment of these conditions should not routinely be offered in primary care as the condition is appropriate for self-care.

<p>Minor burns and scalds e.g. antiseptic and cooling burn gels/creams (Germolene[®], Savlon[®])</p>	<p>No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions. However more serious burns always require professional medical attention. Burns requiring hospital A&E treatment include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All chemical and electrical burns - Large or deep burns - Burns that cause white or charred skin - Burns on the face, hands, arms, feet, legs or genitals that cause blisters
<p>Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and/fever e.g. pain relief tablets/liquid, paracetamol, ibuprofen, aspirin, topical anti-inflammatory/rubefacient gels/creams (Panadol[®], Nurofen[®], Anadin[®], Ibuleve[®], Deep Heat[®])</p>	<p>No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.</p>
<p>Mouth ulcers e.g. antimicrobial mouthwash, chlorhexidine, hydrogen peroxide mouthwash (Corsodyl, Bonjela gel, Orabase paste)</p>	<p>No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.</p>
<p>Nappy rash e.g. nappy rash cream, zinc & castor oil cream/ointment (Bepanthen, Conotrane, Metanium, Sudocrem)</p>	<p>No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.</p>
<p>Oral thrush e.g. Miconazole oromucosal gel (Daktarin)</p>	<p>No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.</p>
<p>Prevention of dental caries e.g. fluoride toothpastes, mouthwashes (BioXtra, Corsodyl, Duraphat, Fluorigard, Ultradex)</p>	<p>No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.</p>
<p>Ringworm/athletes foot e.g. antifungal creams/powders/sprays (Canestan, Daktarin, Lamisil)</p>	<p>Lymphoedema or history of lower limb cellulitis. Refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.</p>
<p>Teething/mild toothache e.g. antiseptic pain relieving gel, benzocaine gel, clove oil (Bonjela teething gel, Dentinox, Orajel)</p>	<p>No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.</p>
<p>Threadworms e.g. Mebendazole tablets/suspension (Ovex)</p>	<p>No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.</p>
<p>Travel sickness e.g. Cinnarizine tablets, hyoscine hydrobromide (Joy-Rides, Kwells, Stugeron)</p>	<p>No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.</p>

Warts and verrucae e.g. Salicylic acid paint/gel/creams/plasters, dimethyl ether propane cold spray (Bazuka, Cuplex, Salactol, Wartex)	No routine exceptions have been identified – refer to appendix 2 for general exceptions.
---	--

APPENDIX 2**General exceptions to the guidance**

1	Patients prescribed an OTC treatment for a long term condition (e.g. regular pain relief for chronic arthritis or treatments for inflammatory bowel disease.)
2	For the treatment of more complex forms of minor illnesses (e.g. severe migraines that are unresponsive to over the counter medicines.)
3	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.)
4	Treatment for complex patients (e.g. immunosuppressed patients.)
5	Patients on prescription only treatments.
6	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 woman who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Community pharmacists will be aware of what these are and can advise accordingly.
7	Patients with a minor condition suitable for self-care that has not responded sufficiently to treatment with an OTC product.
8	Patients where the clinician considers that the presenting symptom is due to a condition that would not be considered a minor condition.
9	Circumstances where the prescriber believes that in their clinical judgement, exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the recommendation to self-care.
10	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.

Appendix 3

[Add GP practice name]

Self care referral to community pharmacy leaflet – no prescription required

You have a common condition that can be treated with a medication that is available to buy over the counter from your local pharmacy.

You do not need to make an appointment to speak to the pharmacist, just pop in anytime and they will be happy to help you.

Ask the pharmacist for help and advice on the most appropriate medication to relieve your symptom for:

	Cough/cold/nasal congestion		Aches/ pains/backache
	Sore throat		Teething/mild toothache
	Skin rash		Conjunctivitis
	Hayfever/allergies		Travel sickness
	Cradle cap		Threadworm
	Haemorrhoids		Head lice
	Infant colic		Mild acne
	Mild cystitis		Athletes foot/ring worm
	Diarrhoea (adult)		Cold sore
	Mild dry skin		Indigestion/heartburn
	Headache/migraine		Insect bites/stings
	Mouth ulcer		Nappy rash
	Oral thrush		Prevention of oral caries
	Warts verrucae		Infrequent constipation
OTC treatment recommended (Optional)			

If at any time you are concerned about your condition or if your symptoms are not improving after a few days of treatment with the over the counter medications you should contact the local pharmacist or your GP surgery for more advice.

For more information visit NHS choices <https://www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx>