

Over the Counter Medicines Prescribing – Briefing

March 2018

1. NHS England has published [new prescribing guidance](#) (29 March 2018) which covers 35 minor, short-term health conditions, which are either ‘self-limiting’ or suitable for ‘self-care’:
 - a. 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.
 - b. A **minor illness that is suitable for self-care** can be treated with items that can be purchased over the counter from a pharmacy. These conditions include, for example, indigestion, mouth ulcers and warts and verrucae.

What has changed?

2. The new guidance recommends that, for 35 minor, short-term conditions, medicines which are available over the counter are no longer routinely prescribed.
3. Vitamins, minerals and probiotics are also included in the restrictions as items of limited clinical effectiveness.

When will the changes happen?

4. The commissioning guidance is addressed to CCGs and should now be considered by individual CCG boards [which will determine the timescale for decision and implementation in their local areas during 2018.](#)
5. A range of national resources will be developed to support local implementation.

Who is affected by the change?

6. Once CCGs have adopted the new guidance locally, it will apply to everyone who is not covered by the general or condition-specific exceptions listed in the guidance document. 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 over the counter items subject to the item being clinically effective.

- For the self-limiting conditions, where symptom relief may be required, the general exceptions will only apply where the prescription is for an over the counter item that is clinically effective.
- For vitamins, minerals and probiotics, only the condition-specific exceptions will apply.

List of minor illnesses or items for which prescribing is restricted:

Self-limiting illnesses:

1. Acute Sore Throat
2. Infrequent Cold Sores of the lip
3. Conjunctivitis
4. Coughs and colds and nasal congestion
5. Cradle Cap (Seborrhoeic dermatitis – infants)
6. Haemorrhoids
7. Infant Colic
8. Mild Cystitis

Minor illnesses suitable for self-care:

9. Mild Irritant Dermatitis
10. Dandruff
11. Diarrhoea (Adults)
12. Dry Eyes/Sore (tired) Eyes
13. Earwax
14. Excessive sweating (Hyperhidrosis)
15. Head lice
16. Indigestion and Heartburn
17. Infrequent constipation
18. Infrequent Migraine
19. Insect bites and stings
20. Mild Acne
21. Mild Dry Skin
22. Sunburn
23. Sunburn Protection
24. Mild to Moderate Hay fever/Seasonal Rhinitis
25. Minor burns and scalds
26. Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and/fever. (e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain)
27. Mouth ulcers
28. Nappy Rash
29. Oral Thrush

30. Prevention of dental caries
31. Ringworm/Athletes foot
32. Teething/Mild toothache
33. Threadworms
34. Travel Sickness
35. Warts and Verrucae

Items of limited clinical effectiveness:

- Probiotics
- Vitamins and minerals.