

Position Statement for prescribing preparations available to buy over the counter (OTC) for self-care

NHS Southwark 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, **NHS Southwark CCG no longer supports the routine prescribing on the NHS of medications for short term illnesses and minor conditions, and health supplements.**

What treatments and preparations are included and why?

- Pharmacy Only (P) purchased from a pharmacy and General Sales Lists (GSL) treatments that can be purchased from a pharmacy or other retail outlets often at a lower cost than would be incurred by the NHS on a prescription.
- Self-limiting conditions that heal/resolve without medical intervention; 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 or advice.

Examples of treatments available OTC which should no longer be routinely prescribed on the NHS in Southwark: (*This list is not exhaustive*)

Analgesics (painkillers) for short-term use	Herbal and complementary supplements
Anti-diarrhoeal medication for short term use (up to 72 hours)	Indigestion remedies
Antifungal treatment for short term minor ailments	Laxatives for short term use (up to 72 hours)
Antiperspirants	Mouth wash
Cold sore treatment	Mouth ulcers treatment
Colic treatment	Nappy rash treatment
Cough and cold remedies	Hay fever medicines
Ear wax removers	Threadworm tablets
Eye treatments	Topical acne treatment which is available over the counter
Eye lubricating products	Topical steroids for short term use (up to 1 week) for bites, stings or mild dermatitis
Head lice treatment and scabies treatment	Vitamins and minerals
Haemorrhoidal preparations for short term use (5-7 days)	Warts and verruca treatment

What general exclusions apply?

- Medicines that can only be obtained with an NHS prescription - Prescription Only Medicines (POM)

- Where an OTC medicine is outside of its marketing authorisation, also known as “off-label use” or “unlicensed use”. For example when it is not licensed for use during pregnancy or where age or existing medical condition restrictions apply
- Where an OTC medicine is being prescribed for a long-term (chronic) condition e.g. paracetamol regularly four times daily in osteoarthritis
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, including, but not limited to, children, where there might be concerns that treatment might otherwise not be provided.
- When patients access their medicines under the Pharmacy First scheme

Guidance for prescribers

General Medical Council (May 2013) guidance [Good practice in prescribing and managing medicines and devices](#) states the following:

- ‘Prescribing’ is used to describe many related activities, including supply of POMs, prescribing medicines, devices and dressings on the NHS and advising patients on the purchase of OTC medicines and other remedies
- If a patient asks for a treatment that the doctor considers would not be of overall benefit to them, the doctor should discuss the issues with the patient and explore the reasons for their request. If, after discussion, the doctor still considers that the treatment would not be of overall benefit to the patient, they do not have to provide the treatment. But they should explain their reasons to the patient, and explain any other options that are available, including the option to seek a second opinion.

Clinical judgment should be used when considering whether it is acceptable to ask patients to purchase their medication.

The Self Care Forum has produced numerous resources that can be used by healthcare professionals to help support people to self-care:

<http://www.selfcareforum.org/resources/>

Patients should be advised that:

- The NHS recommends everyone keeps a well-stocked medicine cabinet with self-care medicines.
<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Pharmacy/Pages/Yourmedicinecabinet.aspx>

- Community pharmacists can offer advice on how to manage short term illnesses and minor conditions, when to seek medical advice, and what to take if they take other medications. They do not need to make an appointment to see the pharmacist, and many pharmacies are open late nights and at the weekend
- If their problem is more serious and needs the attention of another healthcare professional such as your GP, the pharmacist will advise them on this.
- Advice is also available from NHS Choices <http://www.nhs.uk> and NHS 111