

Policy on the Prescribing of Medicines that are available to purchase over the counter for self-limiting conditions

Empowering people with the confidence and information to look after themselves when the can, and visit the GP when they need to, gives people greater control of their own health and encourages healthy behaviours that help prevent ill health in the long-term.

This can be achieved through a programme of education, reinforced by a cohesive approach across the health economy to requests for prescriptions for self-limiting conditions. There are 194 pharmacies in Norfolk and Waveney. Any person with a Norfolk and Waveney postcode is within a 20 minute drive of a pharmacy. There are also on-line pharmacies that will deliver to a person's chosen address.

The following principles are those expected to be used across Norfolk and Waveney:

1. An increasing range of medicines are available for purchase and it is expected that patients will purchase such medicines after seeking appropriate advice from a community pharmacist or other healthcare professional. ([Appendix A](#)) This is particularly the case in self-limiting illness such as those described below. The range of medicines available increases regularly.
 - ❖ Treatment of acute pain, such as headache, muscular aches and strains
 - ❖ Management of coughs and colds
 - ❖ Reducing body temperature where this is a small increase in temperature
 - ❖ Treating one-off constipation and/or diarrhoea
 - ❖ Treating minor abrasions or irritated skin or dry skin
 - ❖ Minor allergic responses and hay fever
 - ❖ Occurrences of head-lice infestation
 - ❖ Treatment of bouts of dyspepsia resulting from over-indulgence
 - ❖ Treatment of occasional vaginal thrush
2. Patients and the public have available an increasing range of resources for advice on medicines use e.g. community pharmacists (and their teams); NHS 111; NHS Choices; the internet, which can be used to enable self-care as well as their GP or a Nurse. South Norfolk CCG encourages patients and the public to access advice and to purchase appropriate over the counter medicines.
3. The patients and the public is encouraged to maintain a stock of homely remedies to facilitate prompt treatment for minor conditions, e.g. indigestion remedies, paracetamol/ibuprofen
4. Patients are expected, where possible, to try and alter their diet and life-style if it is probable that this is the cause of health problem, e.g. dyspepsia and to make reasonable adjustments to limit likelihood of symptoms e.g. allergy and hayfever
5. Where a treatment is needed on a long-term (chronic) basis, e.g. paracetamol regularly four times daily in osteoarthritis, the patient's regular clinician may choose to prescribe.
6. 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. Similarly recommendations to seek antibiotics for self-limiting, mainly viral, conditions should not be made.

Appendix A: Medication which can be purchased from a community pharmacy and should not routinely be prescribed for self-limiting or minor conditions

(A medicine purchased OTC may have restrictions within its product license on dose/duration/site of application compared to when prescribed)

Analgesia

- ❖ Paracetamol tablets/ caplets/ capsules/ suspension/ soluble tablets
- ❖ Ibuprofen tablets/ capsules/ suspension/ liquid
- ❖ Co-codamol 8/500 tablets/ capsules/ soluble tablets
- ❖ Topical analgesics – NSAID gels/creams/ointments and rubefaciants e.g. Algesal®; Deep Heat®

Cough and Cold

- ❖ Decongestants – topical & systemic
- ❖ Simple linctus, demulcents, cough suppressants
- ❖ Sore throat treatments
- ❖ Normal saline nasal sprays/drops

Antihistamines and allergy

- ❖ Oral antihistamines e.g. chlorpheniramine, cetirizine, loratidine, acrivastine
- ❖ Allergy and steroid nasal sprays/drops – beclomethasone; fluticasone
- ❖ Allergy eye drops e.g. antihistamine drops Otrivine Antistin®; mast cell stabilisers Sodium cromoglycate (Opticrom®)

Gastrointestinal

- ❖ Constipation e.g. lactulose, senna, docusate, bisacodyl (tabs & suppositories), ispaghula husk, glycerine suppositories, macrogols (Movicol®)
- ❖ Diarrhoea e.g. loperamide, rehydration salts
- ❖ Heartburn and indigestion e.g. antacids and alginates

Haemorrhoids (cream, ointment, suppositories)

- ❖ Local anaesthetics and astringents (e.g. Anusol®)
- ❖ Corticosteroids e.g. hydrocortisone (Anusol HC®)

Dermatology

- ❖ Emollients for dry skin
- ❖ Sun protection cream (sunscreens)
- ❖ Corticosteroids for short courses (15gm, 7 day treatments) e.g. hydrocortisone 1% (10 years of age and over), clobetasone (12 years of age and over)
- ❖ Topical fungal skin infections e.g. clotrimazole (Canesten®); miconazole (Daktarin®); terbinafine (Lamisil®); ketoconazole (Nizoral®)
- ❖ Barrier creams for nappy rash
- ❖ Wart and verruca treatments

Vaginal Thrush (16-60 years; maximum 2 episodes in 6 months)

- ❖ Clotrimazole creams and pessaries
- ❖ Fluconazole 150mg capsule

Cold sore treatments

- ❖ Aciclovir

Teething and Mouth ulcers

- ❖ Teething gels, pastes and liquids e.g. Bongela®, Anbesol®
- ❖ Mouth ulcer treatments

Head lice and threadworm treatments

- ❖ Head lice: Due to wide spread resistance to insecticides these are no longer recommended. Wet combing is first line.
- ❖ Threadworm e.g. mebendazole 100mg tablets

This list is not exhaustive and there may be alternative medicines available from the Community Pharmacy. People (patients) should be encouraged to speak to their pharmacist in the first instance.

Acknowledgement: This policy is based on that developed by NHS Cambridge and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group