Patients with minor and common health issues will be offered a same-day booked consultation with a pharmacist at their pharmacy, providing them with faster treatment and reducing pressures on GPs and A&E departments.

New contractual framework will redefine the integral role community pharmacies play in delivering healthcare over the next 5 years, as part of the NHS Long Term Plan.

Patients with minor health issues will be offered same-day appointments with their pharmacist, under a new deal announced by Health Secretary Matt Hancock to improve care and expand the role of community pharmacists.

The new NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service will see anyone calling NHS 111 seeking help for minor conditions such as earache or a sore throat offered an appointment at their local pharmacist. Following successful testing, it will be expanded over the next 5 years to include referrals from GPs and A&E, giving patients with minor symptoms the option of a same-day consultation. Patients will continue to have the option to see their GP or attend A&E should they wish.

Pharmacists are highly trained health professionals who undergo five years of training, giving them expert knowledge of medicines and drug interactions. This approach seeks to better harness their skills to benefit patients and could see millions of appointments being provided by community pharmacists where appropriate, including minor illnesses such as headaches, skin rashes and congestion. It’s estimated that up to 6% of all GP consultations could be safely transferred to a community pharmacy, which is up to 20 million GP appointments per year.

This will help relieve pressure on the wider NHS by connecting patients with community pharmacy as their first port of call for health advice on minor illness, as the NHS delivers the Long Term Plan, which the Government has backed with an extra £33.9 billion a year by 2023/24.

The new offer is part of a raft of services being announced as part of the new five-year Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework which will take effect from October, focusing on three key areas of prevention, urgent care and medicines safety to help more people stay well in their community. This includes extra training to spot the signs of health issues including sepsis and heart disease.

The deal commits almost £13 billion to community pharmacy – £2.592 billion per year – to expand the role of community pharmacy, while continuing to support the introduction of new services over the course of the five-year contract.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

“Pharmacists are integral to community health and I want to move towards the French model, where they offer a wider range of services and play a stronger role in the community.

“Every day more than a million people use our community pharmacies in England and we want to support our incredible pharmacists to unlock their full potential, helping them
offer more health advice and support more patients as part of our Long Term Plan for
the NHS.

“Community pharmacies are a vital and trusted part of our NHS, and this five-year deal
will ensure more people get support in the most appropriate setting, which in turn helps
relieve pressure on the wider health service.”

The NHS Long Term Plan commitment to help older people age well will see better use
of community pharmacists’ medicines expertise. Pharmacists will be able to offer patients
recently discharged from hospital more advice and support, including helping with repeat
prescriptions without having to return to the GP.

Areas the new contractual framework will expand over the next five years include:

• Providing staff with online training to spot the early signs of sepsis, recognising the
  need to act fast to identify and treat this condition. All pharmacists will be offered
  training, so more people will receive the urgent care they need
• Developing and testing an early detection service to help identify people who may
  have undiagnosed cardiovascular disease, so they can be referred on for further
  testing and treatment if required
• Checking all patients with diabetes who present to ensure they have had their annual
  foot and eye check
• Ensuring pharmacists receive the latest guidance on how to assist anyone with
dementia
• Rolling out the Healthy Living Pharmacy scheme to all pharmacies in England –
  anyone seeking advice on how to lose weight or stop smoking will be able to speak
to trained health champions on site
• Introducing Hepatitis C testing for those enrolled in needle exchange programmes
• Exploring how pharmacists can be better supported to spot the warning signs of
  suicide, including training to ensure pharmacists are equipped to ask, where
  appropriate, the right questions and strengthen resources and signposting
• Introducing proactive medicine safety checks to avoid patients receiving dangerous
  combinations of drugs.

Chief Pharmaceutical Officer Keith Ridge said:
“This deal provides the accessible and convenient healthcare that the public really want
while offering a more fulfilling clinical career to pharmacists and pharmacy technicians
as a valued part of the NHS team.
“Joining up primary care organisations - GPs, pharmacists and community services - for
our patients, is the foundation of the NHS Long Term Plan and community pharmacies
are an important part of these networks, where residents can get a range of health
checks and advice as well as picking up their prescription, a service which will now be
even safer and more efficient.”

Ed Waller, Director of Primary Care Strategy and NHS Contracts, said:
“This deal signals a step change in what people can expect from their local pharmacy
over the next five years. The NHS has agreed an expanded clinical role for local
pharmacists in treating minor illnesses and delivering prevention work, supporting
significant improvements in patient care under the NHS Long Term Plan and making
better use of the clinical skills of highly trained professionals, like pharmacists, working
closely with GPs.”

Simon Dukes, Chief Executive of the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating
Committee (PSNC), said:
“PSNC is pleased to have agreed a five-year funding settlement for community pharmacy. This multi-year deal represents a clear commitment to the future of the sector from HM Government and gives community pharmacy contractors both some financial certainty and a vision for the services that DHSC and NHS E&I want them to deliver.

“The deal will help to integrate community pharmacies into the wider healthcare landscape and expand the services they can offer, both of which will benefit the NHS and patients.

“We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with both DHSC and NHS E&I to maximise the potential of community pharmacy to help deliver the NHS Long Term Plan and the vision for primary medical and community services.”

--ENDS--

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Minor Symptom Groups for NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (all ages above 1 year of age) include:
  Acne; spots and pimples; ankle or foot pain or swelling; Athlete's foot; bites or stings; insect or spider blisters; constipation; diarrhoea; ear discharge or ear wax; earache; sticky or watery eyelid problems; hair loss; headache; hearing problems or blocked ear; mouth ulcers; nasal congestion; shoulder pain; skin rash; sleep difficulties; sore throat; tiredness; toe pain or swelling; wrist, hand or finger pain or swelling.

The NHS Long Term Plan published in January 2019 announced plans to invest an extra £33.9bn by 2023/24 into the health service - equivalent to £20.5bn in real terms. The NHS LTP outlined how the reach and skillset of pharmacy teams could be better utilised and further integrated with other parts of the health and care system. For more information visit: https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/