

Prescribing of Medicines Available to Purchase Over the Counter for Self-Care

NHS Tees Valley CCG does not support the prescription of medicines and treatments for self-limiting and minor health conditions where self-care is the most appropriate route and/or medicines and treatments are available to buy over the counter (OTC).

This includes conditions:

- Considered to be self-limiting and so do not need treatment as they will heal or be cured of their own accord;
- Lending themselves to self-care i.e. the person suffering does not normally need to seek medical advice and can manage the condition by purchasing OTC items directly.

This also includes other common items:

- That can be purchased OTC, sometimes at a lower cost than that which would be incurred by the NHS;
- For which there is little evidence of clinical effectiveness

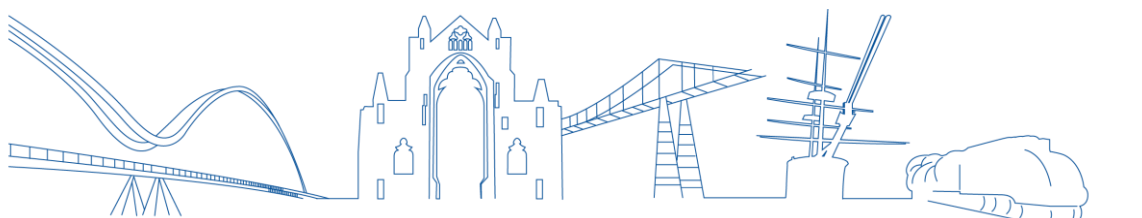
By reducing spend on treating conditions that are self-limiting or which lend themselves to self-care, or on items for which there is little evidence of clinical effectiveness, these resources can be used for other higher priority areas that have a greater impact for patients, support improvements in services and/or deliver transformation that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the NHS.

All prescribers within the Tees Valley, including non-medical prescribers, GPs, extended access, urgent care and A&E departments, should not prescribe readily available over the counter (OTC) medicines. Community Pharmacists should support this approach and not routinely advise patients to request their GP to prescribe OTC medicines available for self-limiting conditions and minor health conditions where these are available to purchase.

The following self-limiting and minor health conditions can be treated effectively and safely using over the counter medicines. Treatments for these conditions are not recommended on prescription.

Items of limited clinical effectiveness	Minor conditions suitable for self-care	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probiotics • Vitamins and minerals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild irritant dermatitis • Dandruff • Diarrhoea (adults) • Dry eyes/ sore tired eyes • Earwax • Excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis) • Head lice • Indigestion and heartburn • Infrequent constipation • Infrequent migraine • Insect bites and stings • Mild acne • Mild dry skin • Sunburn due to excessive sun exposure • Sun protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild to moderate hay fever/ seasonal rhinitis • Minor burns and scalds • Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and/ or fever (e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain) • Mouth ulcers • Nappy rash • Oral thrush • Prevention of dental caries • Ringworm/ athlete's foot • Teething/ mild toothache • Threadworms • Travel sickness • Warts and verrucae
Self-limiting conditions		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute sore throat • Infrequent cold sores of the lip • Conjunctivitis • Coughs and colds and nasal congestion • Cradle cap (seborrheic dermatitis – infants) • Haemorrhoids • Infant colic • Mild cystitis 		

For details of exclusions to this guidance and specific queries, please refer to [NHS England Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed](#) (March 2018)



Example products for conditions or over the counter items that could be restricted

The products highlighted below are included for illustration purposes only. This guidance focuses on prescribing restrictions for the conditions identified.

Condition/ item	Example products
Probiotics	Probiotic sachets
Vitamins and minerals	Vitamin B compound tablets, vitamin C effervescent 1g tablets, multivitamin preparations
Acute sore throat	Lozenges or throat sprays
Cold sores	Antiviral cold sore cream
Conjunctivitis	Antimicrobial eye drops and eye ointment
Coughs and colds and nasal congestion	Cough mixtures or linctus, saline nose drops, menthol vapour rubs, cold and flu capsules or sachets
Cradle cap	Emulsifying ointment, shampoos
Haemorrhoids	Haemorrhoid creams, ointments and suppositories
Infant colic	Simethicone suspensions, lactase drops
Mild cystitis	Sodium bicarbonate or potassium citrate granules
Contact dermatitis	Emollients, steroid creams
Dandruff	Antidandruff shampoos, antifungal shampoos
Diarrhoea (adults)	Loperamide, rehydration sachets
Dry eyes/ sore (tired) eyes	Eye drops for sore tired eyes, hypromellose 0.3% eye drops
Earwax	Drops containing sodium bicarbonate, hydrogen peroxide, olive oil or almond oil
Excessive sweating (mild – moderate hyperhidrosis)	Aluminium chloride sprays, roll-ons, solutions
Head lice	Creams or lotions for head lice
Indigestion and heartburn	Antacid tablets or liquid, ranitidine 150mg tablets, OTC proton pump inhibitors e.g. omeprazole 10mg capsules, sodium alginate, calcium carbonate or sodium bicarbonate liquids
Infrequent constipation	Bisacodyl tablets 5mg, ispaghula husk granules, lactulose solution
Infrequent migraines	Migraine tablets, painkillers, anti-sickness tablets
Insect bites and stings	Steroid creams or creams for itching
Mild acne	Benzoyl peroxide and salicylic acid products
Mild dry skin	Emollient creams, ointments and lotions
Sunburn/ sun protection	After sun cream, sun creams
Mild to moderate hay fever/ seasonal rhinitis	Antihistamine tablets or liquids, steroid nasal sprays, sodium cromoglicate eye drops
Minor burns and scalds	Antiseptic burns cream, cooling burn gel
Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and/ or fever (e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain)	Paracetamol 500mg tablets, ibuprofen 400mg tablets, NSAID topical creams or gels, paracetamol suspension
Mouth ulcers	Antimicrobial mouthwash
Nappy rash	Nappy rash creams
Prevention of dental caries	Fluoride toothpastes, mouthwashes
Ringworm/ athletes foot	Athletes foot cream, antifungal creams or sprays
Teething/ mild toothache	Antiseptic pain relieving gel, clove oil, painkillers
Threadworms	Mebendazole 100mg tablets
Travel sickness	Travel sickness tablets
Warts and verrucae	Creams, gels, skin paints and medicated plasters containing salicylic acid, dimethyl ether propane cold spray

Version 2.0	Developed by NECS Medicines Optimisation on behalf of Tees Valley CCG based on NHS England 'Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs'	
Approved: May 2020 Tees Valley CCG Medicines Optimisation Steering Group		Review: May 2022