

**Good Practice Guidance for Care Homes**  
**Homely Remedies and Self- Care Products**

**All prescribers including non-medical prescribers, GPs, extended hours, urgent care and A&E departments, have been advised they should not prescribe readily available over the counter (OTC) medicines.**

**Background**

In the year prior to June 2017, the NHS spent approximately £569 million on prescriptions for medicines which can be purchased over the counter from a pharmacy and other outlets such as supermarkets.

These prescriptions include items for a condition:

- that is considered to be self-limiting and so does not need treatment as it will heal of its own accord
- which lends itself to self-care i.e. that the person suffering does not normally need to seek medical care but may decide to seek help with symptom relief from a local pharmacy and use an over the counter medicine.

These prescriptions also include other common items:

- that can be purchased over the counter, sometimes at a lower cost than that which would be incurred by the NHS;
- for which there is little evidence of clinical effectiveness.

Following a public consultation, NHS England advised Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) that they should not routinely prescribe over the counter medications for certain conditions.

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

Note: the products highlighted below are included for illustration purposes only.

<b>Condition/Item</b>	<b>Example products</b>
Probiotics	Probiotic sachets
Vitamins and Minerals	Vitamin B compound tablets, Vitamin C effervescent 1g tablets, Vitamin D Multivitamin preparations.
Acute sore throat	Lozenges or throat sprays
Cold sores	Antiviral cold sore cream
Conjunctivitis	Antimicrobial eye drops and eye ointment. E.g. chloramphenicol
Coughs and colds and nasal congestion	Cough mixtures or linctus, saline nose drops, menthol vapour rubs, cold and flu capsules or sachets.

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Cradle cap	Emulsifying ointment, Shampoos
Haemorrhoids	Haemorrhoid creams, ointments and suppositories.
Infant colic	Simethicone suspensions lactase drops
Mild cystitis	Sodium bicarbonate or potassium citrate sachets
Contact dermatitis	Emollients, steroid creams.
Dandruff	Antidandruff shampoos Antifungal shampoos
Diarrhoea (Adults)	Loperamide 2mg capsules 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 to moderate hyperhidrosis)	Aluminium chloride sprays, roll-ons, solutions.
Head lice	Creams or lotions for head lice
Indigestion and heartburn	Antacid tablets or liquids 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 Macrogol sachets Senna tablets or liquid 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 products 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 burn 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

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Mouth ulcers	Antimicrobial mouthwash
Nappy rash	Nappy rash creams
Prevention of dental caries	Fluoride toothpastes Mouthwashes
Ringworm / Athletes foot	Athlete's footcream Antifungal creams or sprays
Teething / mMild 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

**To ensure residents in care homes have access to self-care it is recommended to:**

- 1. Discuss any health needs and medicines with the resident and their family including:**
  - How minor ailments are managed for the individual resident. The care home cannot diagnose a minor ailment or recommend a self-care product.
  - Who is responsible for obtaining the self-care product.
  - Informing the care home when any self-care product is brought into the home (including if it is self-administered). If the care home is to administer, the home must have written authority from a pharmacist or GP.
  - How consent to administer is recorded when a person lacks capacity to make decisions - the decisions may need to be made by the family or at a best interest meeting.
  
- 2. Have policies and procedures for homely remedies and self-care products**  
NICE<sup>1</sup> recommend that care home providers offering non-prescription medicines or other over-the-counter-products (homely remedies) for treating minor ailments should consider having a homely remedies process, which includes the following:
  - the name of the medicine or product and what it is for
  - which residents should not be given certain medicines or products (for example, paracetamol should not be given as a homely remedy if a resident is already receiving prescribed paracetamol)

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/SC1>

- the dose and frequency and the maximum daily dose where any administration should be recorded, such as on the medicines administration record
- how long the medicine or product should be used before referring the resident to a GP or seeking further advice from a healthcare professional.

Care home staff who give non-prescription medicines or other over-the-counter products (homely remedies) to residents should be named in the homely remedies process with evidence of appropriate training and competencies.

They should sign the process to confirm they have the skills to administer the homely remedy and acknowledge that they will be accountable for their actions.

### 3. Consult with Community Pharmacies

The NHS commissions “Community Pharmacy” to provide advice and where appropriate, recommend products for self-care of minor ailments.

NHS England advises patients to seek advice from community pharmacy for minor ailments before requesting a GP appointment and to purchase self-care products rather than requesting an NHS prescription.

People living in their own home will visit their pharmacy for advice and to purchase products either to treat a specific ailment, to keep in “just in case of an ailment “, or to promote a feeling of well-being such as vitamins and minerals. For people living in a care home it is equally important that they have access to these self-care products in the same way as people residing in their own homes.

### 4. Consult with GP Practices.

Locally, GP practices and care homes may agree a list of medicines to be used as as homely remedies to enable the care home to offer relief for defined symptoms for a defined number of doses. The care home must have a homely remedy policy and processes in place to support this.

#### Recommendation for Self-care Product

<https://medicines.necsu.nhs.uk/download/recommendation-for-self-care-product/>

#### Further information regarding Over the Counter medicines and homely remedies:

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/over-counter-medicines-homely-remedies>

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