

Over the counter medicines for self-care

Feeling under the weather?

Please help our NHS to use resources sensibly and always choose self-care and pharmacy first for the treatment of common health conditions



Visit your local pharmacist to find out more

Choose self-care

Costs

Costs to the NHS for self-care medicines are often higher than those for over the counter medicines, when other fees are included such as those for dispensing or medical consultations.

The average cost of many of these medicines for minor illnesses will be around £2-£3, for example antihistamine tablets. The price of these medicines will vary but will range from 35p (for a small pack of paracetamol) to around £5 (for a bottle of branded cough medicine).

How to access information to support self-care

In addition to contacting your local community pharmacist, there are also helpful websites with information to support self-care.

Self-Care Forum: www.selfcareforum.org
'Helping people to take care of themselves'

The NHS website www.nhs.uk includes:
'Health A-Z', 'Medicines A-Z', 'Live Well'



Choose self-care

Is self-care of minor illness appropriate for everyone?

Most people are able to access healthcare advice in order to be able to treat themselves (or others if they are responsible for their care) for minor illnesses.

Therefore your doctor's surgery, health visitor, midwife, district nurse, dentist, optician, podiatrist or other care provider such as NHS 111 may direct you to purchase treatment over the counter or direct you to your local pharmacy for healthcare advice.

If you have difficulty getting to your community pharmacy because of health related issues, they may be able to help you over the phone. In some situations they may also be able to deliver over the counter medicines you have been advised to purchase when they deliver your regular repeat medicines.

There are some exceptions to this guidance which include:

- People prescribed an over the counter medicine for a long term or more complex health condition
- Where a clinician (e.g. doctor) considers that a person's wellbeing could be affected due to health, mental health or social vulnerability.

A full list of exceptions can be accessed here: www.gloucestershireccg.nhs.uk/otc

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Choose self-care

The importance of self-care

Community pharmacy teams are able to offer advice on how to manage current and prevent future minor illnesses. They are experts on medicines and can suggest low cost treatment options which enable you to take action quickly without the need to visit your doctor's surgery.

By asking a few questions about your condition the pharmacist will be able to signpost you to other healthcare services if needed.



By keeping a selection of essential medicines at home you can:

Treat common conditions quickly

Get treatment without the need to see your doctor

Avoid unnecessary trips to A&E



Choose self-care

Choose self-care

Over the counter medicines

In the summer of 2018, following national guidance¹, a range of medicines that are available to buy over the counter from pharmacies and supermarkets became classed as items that should no longer be routinely available on the NHS via prescription.

This means that your doctor will now need to direct you to buy these medicines.

The medicines associated with this decision are for a number of minor, short term conditions, which either get better by themselves or you can treat yourself (self-care). For example, medicines for coughs, colds, mild dry skin, mild to moderate hay fever, nappy rash, warts or earwax.

It also applies to a range of vitamins and minerals, which are considered to be food supplements and should be purchased over the counter.



1. Guidance on conditions for which over the counter medicines should not be routinely prescribed in primary care

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs/>

To discuss receiving this information in large print or Braille please ring 0800 015 1548.

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如需以其他格式接收此信息，请联系

V případě, že potřebujete obdržet tuto informaci v jiném formátu, kontaktujte prosím

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По вопросам получения информации в других форматах просим обращаться

Ak si želáte získať túto informáciu v inom formáte, kontaktujte prosím

FREEPOST RRYY-KSGT-AGBR,
PALS, NHS Gloucestershire Clinical
Commissioning Group, Sanger House,
5220 Valiant Court, Gloucester
Business Park, Gloucester GL3 4FE

0800 015 1548

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