

## Policy on Prescribing of Medicines that are Available for Purchase (Self-Care)

**Funding of medicines available to purchase to treat self-limiting conditions and minor ailments and self-care is a personal responsibility.**

**It is expected that patients will purchase such medicines (see table 1 for examples) after seeking appropriate advice from a community pharmacist or other healthcare professional. All patients, regardless of where they live, should be able to access and purchase such medicines.**

**It is expected that GPs will not prescribe over the counter (OTC) medicines where it is reasonable and appropriate for patients to obtain low cost OTC medication direct from pharmacies as advised by the GMC.**

**There is a range of resources for advice on medicines use, such as community pharmacists and NHS 111, which can be used to enable self-care before seeking advice from a GP or a Nurse.**

**Individuals are expected, where possible, to try to alter their diet and lifestyle if it is probable that this is the cause of a minor health problem such as dyspepsia.**

**Where patients are regularly using OTC medicines for a long-term condition, for example regular full-dose paracetamol for chronic pain, it would not be unreasonable to prescribe. However, where patients are willing and able to self-purchase they should be encouraged to do so.**

Further GMC advice:

From a clinical perspective, there is a considerable difference between:

- a) not prescribing an OTC medicine (such as paracetamol) as part of an appropriate move towards encouraging and facilitating appropriate self-care and the use of pharmacy services and
- b) an OTC medicine which is part of a complex combination of medicines to manage a long term condition, where the GP is providing active follow-up of the combination.

The GMC says: "Our feeling was it wouldn't put GPs in breach of GMC guidance, provided they are making the care of their patients their first concern."

It remains good practice to encourage appropriate self-care for the current and future illnesses, and this includes appropriate use of OTC medication and the use of community pharmacists for healthcare advice.

Medicines can be purchased over the counter (OTC) from community pharmacies and/or supermarkets. These often have extended opening times, allowing rapid access and early treatment rather than delaying treatment by attending a GP appointment for a prescription. The range of medicines available increases regularly and a community pharmacist is best placed to give advice on the most appropriate product to use. Many minor ailments are not of a serious nature and will resolve within a short time-frame without the need for treatment. Community Pharmacists are able to advise and signpost patients in situations where they should seek medical advice.

**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 problems where these are available to purchase. Patients who are willing and able to self-purchase appropriately licensed OTC medicines for their long term conditions should be encouraged to do so.**

It is important to check that the OTC medicine is licensed for the indication that it is to be used for and not contraindicated or restricted for OTC use, otherwise requests for purchasing OTC medicines for off-license indications will be refused by community pharmacies. See table 2 for common OTC medications, the conditions for which they are used for and OTC restrictions.

**Table 1: Medications for minor ailments and self-limiting conditions which should be purchased seek advice from community pharmacists**

- Pain killers for acute minor aches/pains including migraine and mild temperature, such as paracetamol
- Treatment of coughs and colds including cough syrup, nasal drops and inhalations
- Treating one-off/non serious constipation and/or diarrhoea
- Treatments for haemorrhoids
- Hay fever preparations
- Allergy preparations for non-serious stings and insect bites and eye drops for allergies
- Eye drops for minor eye infections, dry eye conditions
- Treatment for occurrences of head-lice infestation, Head lice lotions and shampoos
- Treatment of occasional bouts of dyspepsia
- Treatment of oral or vaginal thrush
- Treatment of cystitis
- Antiperspirants
- Athlete's foot cream and powders
- Topical fungal nail treatments
- Barrier creams for nappy rash
- Creams, gels or lotions for:
  - dry skin conditions
  - female facial hair removal
  - minor acne
  - sprains and sports injuries
  - bruising, scars, tattoos and varicose veins.
  - minor abrasions or irritated skin – (antiseptic creams)
  - sun screens – unless treatment according to the policy on sunscreens
- Tubigrip/plasters/bandages for sprains and sports injuries
- Ear wax removers and softeners
- Toiletries
- Lozenges, throat sprays, mouthwashes and gargles
- Moisturisers and bath additives for minor dry skin conditions
- Slimming preparations other than those restricted to prescription only
- Threadworm tablets
- Tonics, vitamins, health supplements and complementary medicines
- Travel medicines such as for travel sickness

**Common medications available over the counter  
(OTC) for minor ailments**

Minor Ailment	Medication (For further advice on which medication to recommend, see product information leaflet)	Brands to be noted (not an exhaustive list)	OTC restrictions (For further advice on restrictions, see product information leaflet)	Classification P (pharmacy only) GSL (general sale)
<b>Acute pain, headache, temperature</b>	Paracetamol 500mg tablets	Anadin Mandalol Disprol Panadol Hedex	Long term conditions requiring regular pain relief	GSL (– packs of 16) P (up to 32)
	Ibuprofen 200mg, 400mg Ibuprofen 100mg/5ml Liquid	Anadin Ibuprofen Nurofen Calprofen Cuprofen Anadin Joint pain	Long term conditions requiring regular pain relief Asthma Unstable high blood pressure Taking anticoagulants Stomach ulcers/problems Children under 3 months <b>Not for use in Chicken Pox</b>	GSL (200mg– packs of 16) P (400mg – up to 32 tablets)
	Co-codamol 8/500mg	Migravele Yellow tabs Paracodol	Children under 12 yrs Severe Liver disease Breastfeeding Pregnancy	P (up to 32 tablets)
	Paracetamol 120mg/5ml suspension (from 3 months) Paracetamol 250mg/5ml suspension (from 6 years old)	Calpol Medinol Sootheze six plus	Children under 2 months Babies born before 37 weeks Babies weighing less than 4 kg	GSL
	Ibuprofen 5% gel	Fenbid Ibuleve Nurofen	Children under 14 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding	GSL
	Diclofenac 2.32% and 3% gel	Voltarol Emulgel Solaraze	Broken/infected skin Asthma	P

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	Aspirin 300mg dispersible tablets	Anadin original Disprin	Asthma Peptic ulceration Third trimester pregnancy Children under 16 yrs Haemophilia Current Anticoagulant therapy	GSL ( packs of 16) P (other pack sizes)
<b>Hayfever/Allergies</b>	Chlorphenamine 4mg tablets	Allercalm Piriton Hayleve	Children under 12 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P
	Chlorphenamine 2mg/5ml solution	Allerief Piriton	Children under 1 yrs Children with Asthma Children taking Monoamine oxidase inhibitors	P
	Loratidine 10mg tablets	Clarityn Allergy Clarityn Rapide	Children under 12 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding	GSL (pack size 10 tablets) P (other pack sizes)
	Acrivastine 8mg capsules	Benadryl Allergy relief Benadryl plus	Children under 12 yrs Adults over 65 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding	GSL (pack size 12 tablets) P (other pack sizes)
	Cetirizine 10mg tablets Cetirizine 1mg/ml solution	Benadryl Zirtek Allergy solution Benadryl Allergy relief solution Zirtek Piriteze Pollenshield	Children under 12 yrs Patients with kidney problems Pregnancy Breastfeeding	GSL (pack size 14 tablets) GSL (pack size 70ml) P (other pack sizes)
	Beclomethasone 0.05% Nasal Spray	Beconase Nasobec Pollenase	Children under 18 yrs	GSL (100 spray pack) P(180 spray pack)
	Sodium cromoglycate 2% eye drops	Allercrom Optrex allergy Catacrom allergy relief Opticrom hayfever	Children under 6 yrs	GSL

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<b>Athletes foot</b>	Miconazole 2% cream 0.16% powder	Daktarin Daktarin aktiv	Diabetic patients Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P (cream) GSL (powder)
	Terbinafine hydrochloride 1%	Lamisil AT cream, gel, spray Scholl advanced cream, powder, spray	Children under 16 yrs Diabetic patients Pregnancy Breastfeeding	GSL
<b>Cold sores</b>	Aciclovir cream 5%	Virasorb Zovirax Lypsyl	Immunocompromised & terminally ill Only for face and lips	GSL (only if specified for cold sore)
<b>Conjunctivitis (uncomplicated/Bacterial)</b>	Chloramphenical 0.5% eye drops Chloramphenical 1% eye ointment	Brochlor Golden eye Lumicare Optrex	Children under 2 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P
<b>Cystitis</b>	Sodium Citrate 4g sachet	Cystocalm Cymalon CanesOasis	Men and Children under 16 yrs Diabetic patients Heart disease, hypertension, renal disease Pregnancy Breastfeeding	GSL
	Potassium Citrate 1.5g liquid 3g sachet 1.5g tablet (effervescent)	Cymaclear Cystopurin Effercitrate	Children under 6 yrs History of kidney disease Pregnancy Breastfeeding	GSL
<b>Diarrhoea</b>	Oral rehydration solutions/sachets	Dioralyte relief sachets Electrolade sachets	Patients with liver or kidney disease Patients on low potassium/sodium diets Patients with diabetes	GSL

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<b>Diarrhoea</b>	Loperamide 2mg caps	Imodium Diocalm ultra Entrocalm Diah-limit	Children under 12 yrs Inflammatory bowel disease Post bowel surgery Post pelvic radiation Colorectal cancer	GSL (pack size 6 capsules) P (other pack sizes)
<b>Ear wax</b>	Olive oil drops Arachis oil/chlorobutanol hemihydrate drops Docusate sodium 0.5% drops Acetic Acid 2%	Cerumol Waxsol EarCalm	No restrictions	GSL (Olive oil) P (all other ear drops/sprays)
<b>Head lice</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> line – Dimeticone gel, lotion or spray 4%	Hedrin      Nyda Lyclear Nitrid	Babies under 6 months	GSL (100ml pack) P (other pack size)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> line - Malathion Aqueous lotion 0.5%	Derbac-M		GSL
<b>Haemorrhoids</b>	Zinc oxide	Anusol cream and ointment Haemorrhoid relief Germoloids cream and ointment	Children under 16 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding Rectal bleeding or blood in stools	GSL
<b>Indigestion, Dyspepsia Heartburn, Upset stomach</b>	Sodium Alginate Calcium carbonate Sodium Bicarbonate	Gaviscon 250 tablets Gaviscon cool Gaviscon Double action Rennie	Children under 12 yrs	GSL
		Gaviscon Infant	Babies under 12 months Babies born before 37 weeks Children over 2 yrs	P
	Bismuth subsalicylate	Pepto-Bismol	Children under 16 yrs Sesnsitive aspirin	P

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<b>Indigestion, Dyspepsia Heartburn, Upset stomach</b>	Esomeprazole 20mg tablets	Nexium Control	Children under 18 yrs Adults over 55 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding Jaundice or liver disease	GSL
	Pantoprazole 20mg tablets	Pantoloc Control	Children under 18 yrs Adults over 55 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding Jaundice or liver disease	P
	Ranitidine 75mg tablets	Zantac Gavilast Ranicalm	Children under 12 yrs Peptic ulceration Elderly taking NSAIDs	GSL (pack size 12 tablets)
<b>Infant colic</b>	Simeticone 40mg/ml	Infacol	No restrictions	GSL
	Dimeticone 42mg/5ml	Dentinox	Fructose, glucose-galactose or sucrose intolerant patients (contains sucrose)	GSL
<b>Nappy rash</b>	Titanium dioxide, titanium peroxide, titanium salicylate	Metanium	No restrictions	GSL
	Zinc oxide, Benzyl alcohol, benzyl benzoate, lanolin	Sudocrem	No restrictions	GSL
<b>Nasal congestion</b>	Sodium chloride 0.9% nasal drops, spray	Snufflebabe nasal drops Calpol soothe and care drops and spray Mandanol nasal drops	No restrictions	GSL
<b>Scabies</b>	Permethrin 5% dermal cream	Lyclear Lythrin	Babies under 2 months	P
	Crotamiton 10% cream	Eurax	Children under 3 yrs Breastfeeding Pregnancy	GSL
<b>Teething, sore mouth</b>	Lidocaine Hydrochloride, Chlorocresol, Cetylpyridinium	Bonjela Anbesol	Children under 16 yrs Active peptic ulceration	GSL

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<b>conditions (i.e ulcers)</b>  <b>Teething, sore mouth conditions (i.e ulcers)</b>	Chloride Choline salicylate, cetalkonium chloride	Orajel	Pregnancy Breastfeeding	
	Bonjela teething gel	Bonjela teething	Babies under 2 months Heart disease, Liver disease	GSL
<b>Threadworms</b>	Mebendazole 100mg tablets	Ovex (only P licensed brand)	Children under 2 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P
<b>Thrush/oral thrush</b>	Clotrimazole 1 % cream	Canesten	Children under 16 yrs Adults over 65 yrs	P
	Clotrimazole 2% cream Clotrimazole 10% intravaginal cream		Children under 16 yrs Adults over 60 yrs Pregnancy	P
	Clotrimazole 500mg pessary and Clotrimazole 2% cream	Canesten thrush combi	Children under 2 yrs Adults over 65 yrs	GSL
	Fluconazole 150mg capsule and clotrimazole 2% cream	Canesten Duo	Lactose intolerance Pregnancy Children under 16 yrs Adults over 60 yrs	P
	Fluconazole 150mg capsule	Canesten Thrush	Lactose intolerance Pregnancy Children under 16 yrs Adults over 60 yrs	P
	Miconazole 2% oral gel (15g)	Daktarin oral gel	Children under 4 months Pregnancy, Breastfeeding Patients taking warfarin	P
<b>Sore throat</b>	Benzydamine	Difflam Spray Difflam Oral rinse	Children under 12yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P



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<b>Minor skin complaints (Dermatitis, mild to moderate dry skin etc)</b>	Clobetasone 0.05% cream	Eumovate eczema & dermatitis cream	Children under 12 yrs Broken or inflamed skin Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P
	Crotamiton 10% Crotamiton 10%, Hydrocortisone 0.25%	Eurax Eurax HC	Children under 3 yrs Broken or inflamed skin Pregnancy Breastfeeding	GSL (Eurax) P (Eurax HC)
	Emollient creams, lotions, gels	E45, Doublebase, Isomol gel, Diprobase Cetraben	No restrictions	GSL
	Urea 5%, lauromacrogals 3%	E45 itch relief	Broken or inflamed skin	GSL
	Calamine lotion		No restrictions	GSL
	Colloidal oatmeal ointment	Aveeno	No restrictions	GSL
<b>Warts/Verrucas</b>	Verruca gel - Salicyclic acid, lactic acid	Bazuka Extra strength gel Bazuka Gel Bazuka treatment gel	Diabetic Patients Face, neck, ano-genital area Moles, birthmarks, hairy warts or skin lesions Broken skin	P GSL (Bazuka treatment gel)
	Wart paint/ointment - Salicyclic acid, lactic acid	Salactol Occlusal Salatac Verrugon ointment	Diabetic patients Face, neck, ano-genital area Moles, birthmarks, hairy warts or skin lesions Broken skin Impaired peripheral blood circulation	P P
		Scholl Freeze Bazuka Sub zero	Children under 4 yrs Diabetic Patients Face, neck, ano-genital area Moles, birthmarks, hairy warts or skin lesions Broken skin	GSL

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<b>Previous version</b>	<b>Key Changes</b>
January 2014	Changes to format
April 2015	Minor change - Combined with restricted OTC guide
July 2015	Format change – standardised to prescribing policy statement
October 2016	Addition of common OTC medications and restrictions for their OTC use
April 2017	Update GP support from the NHS England East of England Medical Director