

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
- Indigestion remedies (antacids and alginates) for relief of symptoms of simple indigestion, heartburn or acid reflux.
- 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
- Rosacea (Subtype 1 – Erythematotelangiectatic rosacea)

Minor Ailment	Medication (For further advice on which medication to recommend, see product information leaflet)	Common 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)
Acute pain, headache, temperature	Paracetamol 500mg tablets	Anadin Mandanol 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 Not for use in Chicken Pox	GSL (200mg– packs of 16) P (200mg & 400mg – up to 84 tablets)
	Co-codamol 8/500mg	Migraleve Yellow tabs Paracodol Solpadeine Syndol	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

Minor Ailment	Medication (For further advice on which medication to recommend, see product information leaflet)	Common 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)
	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)
Hayfever/Allergies	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 Rapide	Children under 12 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding	GSL (pack size 10 tablets) P (other pack sizes)
	Loratidine 1mg/ml	Clarityn Allergy	Children under 2 yrs	GSL
	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	Benadryl solution Zirtek Pollenshield	Children under 12 yrs Patients with kidney problems Pregnancy Breastfeeding	GSL (pack size 14 tablets) GSL (pack size 70ml) P (other pack sizes)
	Cetirizine 1mg/ml solution	Piriteze allergy Benadryl Allergy relief Zirtek Allergy solution	Children under 2 yrs	GSL P
	Beclomethasone 0.05% Nasal Spray	Beconase Nasobec Pollenase	Children under 18 yrs	GSL (100 spray pack) P(180 spray pack)
	Fluticasone 0.05% nasal spray	Pirinase allergy Pirinase Hayfever Relief		P GSL

Minor Ailment	Medication (For further advice on which medication to recommend, see product information leaflet)	Common 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)
	Budesonide 64 micrograms nasal spray	Benacort		P
	Mometasone 0.05% nasal spray	Clarinase		P
	Sodium cromoglycate 2% eye drops	Allercrom Optrex allergy Catacrom allergy relief Opticrom hayfever	Children under 6 yrs must use the P product (Optrex allergy, Opticrom, Catacrom)	GSL P
Athletes foot	Miconazole 2% cream 0.16% powder	Daktarin Daktarin aktiv	Diabetic patients Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P (cream) GSL (powder)
	Miconazole nitrate 2% w/w; Hydrocortisone 1%	Daktarin HC		P
	Terbinafine hydrochloride 1%	Lamisil AT cream, gel, spray Scholl advanced cream, powder, spray	Children under 16 yrs Diabetic patients Pregnancy Breastfeeding	GSL
	Clotrimazole 1% and Hydrocortisone 1%.	Canesten hydrocortisone	Children under 10yrs	P
Cold sores	Aciclovir cream 5%	Virasorb Zovirax Lypsyl	Immunocompromised & terminally ill Only for face and lips	GSL (only if specified for cold sore)
Conjunctivitis (uncomplicated/Bacterial)	Chloramphenical 0.5% eye drops Chloramphenical 1% eye ointment	Brochlor Golden eye Lumicare Optrex	Children under 2 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P
Cystitis	Sodium Citrate 4g sachet	Cystocalm Cymalon CanesOasis	Men and Children under 16 yrs Diabetic patients Heart disease, hypertension, renal disease Pregnancy	GSL

Minor Ailment	Medication (For further advice on which medication to recommend, see product information leaflet)	Common 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)
Cystitis			Breastfeeding	
	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
Diarrhoea	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
	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)
Ear wax	Olive oil drops Arachis oil/chlorobutanol hemihydrate drops Docusate sodium 0.5% drops Acetic Acid 2%	Cerumol Waxsol EarCalm	Moderate ear pain Discharge from ear	GSL (Olive oil) P (all other ear drops/sprays)
Head lice	1 st line – Dimeticone gel, lotion or spray 4%	Hedrin Nyda Lyclear Nitrid	Babies under 6 months	GSL (100ml pack) P (other pack size)
	2 nd line - Isopropyl myristate	Full Marks		GSL
Haemorrhoids	Zinc oxide	Anusol cream and ointment and suppositories Haemorrhoid relief Germoloids cream and ointment	Children under 16 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding Rectal bleeding or blood in stools	GSL
	Zinc oxide with hydrocortisone	Anusol Plus ointment and suppositories	Children under 18 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding Rectal bleeding or blood in stools	P

Minor Ailment	Medication (For further advice on which medication to recommend, see product information leaflet)	Common 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)
Indigestion, Dyspepsia Heartburn, Upset stomach	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 Sensitve aspirin	P
	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)
Infant colic	Simeticone 40mg/ml	Infacol	No restrictions	GSL
	Dimeticone 42mg/5ml	Dentinex	Fructose, glucose-galactose or sucrose intolerant patients (contains sucrose)	GSL
Nappy rash	Titanium dioxide, titanium peroxide, titanium salicylate	Metanium	No restrictions	GSL

Minor Ailment	Medication (For further advice on which medication to recommend, see product information leaflet)	Common 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)
Nappy rash	Zinc oxide, Benzyl alcohol, benzyl benzoate, lanolin	Sudocrem	No restrictions	GSL
Nasal congestion	Sodium chloride 0.9% nasal drops, spray	Snufflebabe nasal drops Calpol soothe and care drops and spray Mandanol nasal drops	No restrictions	GSL
	Xymetazoline 0.1% nasal spray Or nasal spray	Otrivine spray and drops Sudafed congestion relief	Children under 12 yrs	GSL
	Pseudoephedrine	Sudafed tablets	Children under 12 yrs Severe hypertension, coronary artery disease Taking Monoamine oxidase inhibitors	P
Scabies	Permethrin 5% dermal cream	Lyclear Lythrin	Babies under 2 months	P
	Crotamiton 10% cream	Eurax	Children under 3 yrs Breastfeeding Pregnancy	GSL
Teething, sore mouth conditions (i.e ulcers)	Lidocaine Hydrochloride, Chlorocresol, Cetylpyridinium Chloride Choline salicylate, cetalkonium chloride	Bonjela Anbesol (P) Orajel	Children under 16 yrs Active peptic ulceration Pregnancy Breastfeeding	GSL P
	Bonjela teething gel	Bonjela teething	Babies under 2 months Heart disease, Liver disease	GSL
Threadworms	Mebendazole 100mg tablets	Ovex (only P licensed brand) Tablets and liquid	Children under 2 yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P

Minor Ailment	Medication (For further advice on which medication to recommend, see product information leaflet)	Common 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)
Thrush/oral thrush	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
Thrush/oral thrush	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
Sore throat	Benzydamine	Diffiam Spray Diffiam Oral rinse	Children under 12yrs Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P
Minor skin complaints (Dermatitis, mild to moderate dry skin etc)	Clobetasone 0.05% cream	Eumovate eczema & dermatitis cream	Children under 12 yrs Broken or inflamed skin Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P
	Hydrocortisone 1% cream/ ointment	Derma care	Children under 12 yrs Broken or inflamed skin Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P
	Crotamiton 10% Crotamiton 10%, Hydrocortisone	Eurax Eurax HC	Children under 3 yrs Broken or inflamed skin	GSL (Eurax) P (Eurax HC)

Minor Ailment	Medication (For further advice on which medication to recommend, see product information leaflet)	Common 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)
Minor skin complaints (Dermatitis, mild to moderate dry skin etc)	0.25%		Pregnancy Breastfeeding	
	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
Warts/Verrucas	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

Title	Policy on Prescribing of Medicines that are Available for Purchase (Self-Care)
Document reference	PrescribingPolicy OTCMedicinesPOL201910V7.0FINAL
Author	Medicines Optimisation Team, Mid Essex CCG
Reference	NHS England, Midlands and East, Medical Director letter "Prescribing of medicines available to purchase over the counter" 16/08/2016
Approved by	Mid Essex Medicines Management Committee
Date approved	October 2019
Next review date	October 2024

Previous version	Key Changes
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
August 2017	Updates to dry eyes, indigestion and OTC examples. Addition of rosacea on list of conditions