

Where can I get further advice?

Community pharmacies are available to provide you with expert health advice and can help you with purchasing the medicines you need over the counter. Many pharmacies have extended opening hours, including weekends and have a consultation room where you can talk to the pharmacist in private.

To find out where your nearest pharmacy is visit: <https://beta.nhs.uk/find-a-pharmacy/>

Advice on minor ailments that can be treated yourself is also available from:

Patient: www.patient.co.uk

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk

Self-Care Forum: www.selfcareforum.org

Keep a well-stocked medicine cabinet at home to help you self-care when you can

Painkillers
Aspirin, paracetamol and ibuprofen are highly effective at relieving most minor aches and pains.

Antihistamines
Useful for dealing with allergies, insect bites and hay fever.

Oral rehydration salts
Oral rehydration salts can help restore your body's natural balance of minerals and fluid lost through diarrhoea, fever, and vomiting - if you can't continue your normal diet.

Indigestion treatment
If you have stomach ache, heartburn or trapped wind, a simple antacid will reduce stomach acidity and bring relief.

Anti-diarrhoea tablets
It's a good idea to keep anti-diarrhoea medicine at home as diarrhoea can happen without warning. Causes include food poisoning and a stomach virus.

Suncream
Keep a suncream of at least factor 15, with UVA protection. Exposure to the sun can cause sunburn and increase your risk of skin cancer.

Summary list of conditions

mild acne	acute sore throat	minor burns and scalds
cold sores	conjunctivitis	infrequent constipation
coughs, colds and nasal congestion		
cradle cap	mild cystitis	dandruff
mild dermatitis	diarrhoea (adults)	dry (tired) eyes
mild dry skin	ear wax	excessive sweating
mild to moderate hayfever	haemorrhoids	head lice
infant colic	indigestion and heartburn	insect stings and bites
infrequent migraine	mouth ulcers	nappy rash
minor pain conditions (aches, sprains, back, period pain)		
oral thrush	prevention of dental caries	ringworm and athlete's foot
sunburn and sunscreens	teething and mild toothache	
threadworms	travel sickness	warts and verrucae
vitamins and minerals or probiotics		

Updated July 2020

NHS

Bath and North East Somerset,
Swindon and Wiltshire
Clinical Commissioning Group

Prescribing of Over the Counter medicines



For 35 minor, short-term health conditions over the counter (OTC) medicines will not be routinely prescribed.

What are over the counter medicines?

Over the counter (OTC) medicines are medicines that can be purchased in a pharmacy under the supervision of a pharmacist, or without pharmacy supervision in local shops and the high street.

Self-care using over the counter medicines helps you to look after yourself and your family when you can.

What has changed?

Following a period of national consultation, NHS England issued new guidance on over the counter medicines. This means that for 35 minor, short-term health conditions over the counter medicines will not be routinely prescribed.

What does this mean for me?

For the conditions listed you are encouraged to seek advice from a pharmacist first and where possible, to buy your medicines over the counter.



Buying medicines over the counter has many benefits:

- You can seek health advice from your local pharmacist, who is an expert in medicines
- You don't need to wait for a GP appointment, meaning you can be treated more quickly
- You can keep the medicines at home so you have them to hand if you need them again (ensure you check the expiry date first and dispose of out of date medicines correctly).

When making an appointment at your GP practice about any of the 35 minor, short-term health conditions, you may be advised by the practice receptionist to seek advice from a pharmacist and buy your required medicines over the counter.

OTC - easy as 1 2 3

1. Advice - think 'pharmacy first'

Your local pharmacist is an expert in medicine. They can advise you about common ailments and provide over the counter medicines

2. Accessible - the high street can help

You can buy a variety of affordable over the counter medicines from pharmacies, local shops and the high street

3. As good as prescribed!

Many over the counter medicines are the same as those your GP can prescribe

Are there any exceptions?

There are certain scenarios where certain patients should continue to have their treatments prescribed, including:

- patients prescribed an over the counter medicine for a long-term, or more complex condition or;
- where a clinician (doctor, nurse, pharmacist) considers that patient's wellbeing could be affected due to health, mental health or significant social vulnerability.

Are OTC medicines as good as those on prescription?

The quality of medicinal treatments is regulated by the Medicines and Health Regulatory Authority (MHRA). This means that all licensed medicines bought over the counter must go through detailed safety and quality tests. There should be no noticeable difference in treatment of symptoms between a medicine that you can buy over the counter and those supplied on prescription.

How much do OTC medicines cost?

The cost of many over the counter medicines is around £2 to £4, although this will vary. For example a small packet of paracetamol can be as little as 30p and a bottle of branded cough mixture could be around £5.