

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

Empowering people with the confidence and information to look after themselves when they are able, and visit the GP when they need to, gives people greater control of their own health and encourages healthy behaviours that help prevent ill health in the long-term.

In many cases people can purchase medicines which are available over the counter from a community pharmacist, reducing the number of GP consultations and enabling GPs to focus on caring for higher risk patients, such as those with comorbidities, the very young and elderly, long-term conditions and providing new services.

For patients that pay for their prescriptions, it may prove helpful to point out that it could be cheaper to purchase the medication over the counter. Exemption from prescription charges does not exempt an individual from self-care with over the counter medication where clinically acceptable.

The following principles are those expected to be used across the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough.

Principles:

1. An increasing range of medicines are available for purchase and **it is expected that patients will purchase such medicines** after seeking appropriate advice from a community pharmacist or other healthcare professional. (Appendix A) The range of medicines available increases regularly.
 - Treatment of pain, such as a headache
 - Management of coughs and colds
 - Reducing body temperature where this is a small increase in temperature
 - Treating constipation and/or diarrhoea
 - Treating minor abrasions or skin conditions
 - Minor allergic responses
 - Treatment of bouts of dyspepsia resulting from over-indulgence
 - Treatment of oral or vaginal thrush
2. Patients and the public have available an increasing range of resources for advice on medicines use, e.g. community pharmacists, NHS 111, the internet, which can be used to enable self-care as well as their GP or a Nurse. Cambridgeshire & Peterborough CCG encourages patients and the public to access advice and purchase such homely remedies as they and their family may need.
3. Patients are expected, where possible, to try to alter their diet and life-style if it is probable that this is the cause of a minor health problem, e.g. dyspepsia.

4. Where a healthcare professional recommends that treatment be considered on a long-term (chronic) basis e.g. paracetamol regularly four times daily in osteoarthritis, patients are able to purchase up to a maximum of 96 tablets (3 x 32 tablets), from a community pharmacy at the discretion of the pharmacist.
5. Community pharmacists should not advise patients to request their GP to prescribe medicines available for self-limiting conditions and minor health problems where these are available to purchase.
6. If a prescriber has particular concerns that a patient might not be able to, or is unwilling to self-care and treatment with a medication is required, then a prescription (FP10) should be considered. Medication to provide symptomatic relief, and where non-pharmacological treatment is available, should not routinely be prescribed on the NHS.
7. For patients who are supported by carers, a carers template letter is available to support self-care <https://www.cambridgeshireandpeterboroughccg.nhs.uk/health-professionals/prescribing-information/formulary-and-drug-classification/> (under self-care section)

The GMC advises that prescribers should make good use of NHS resources, and in most circumstances it will be reasonable and appropriate for patients to obtain low cost over the counter medication direct from their community pharmacist.

Appendix A: Medication which can be purchased from a Community

Pharmacy and should not routinely be prescribed –(A medicine purchased OTC may have restrictions within its product license on dose / duration / site of application compared to when prescribed)

Analgesia

- Paracetamol tablets / caplets / capsules / suspension
- Ibuprofen tablets / capsules / suspension
- Co-codamol 8mg/500mg tablets / capsules
- Topical analgesics: ibuprofen, diclofenac, methyl salicylate

Cough and Cold

- Decongestants
- Simple linctus
- Sore throat treatments
- Normal saline nasal sprays / drops

Antihistamines and allergy

- Oral antihistamines: chlorpheniramine, cetirizine, loratadine, acrivastine
- Allergy and steroid nasal sprays: beclomethasone / fluticasone (*18 years and over)
- Allergy eye drops: sodium cromoglycate, nedocromil

Thrush (maximum 2 episodes in 6 months)

- Clotrimazole cream and pessaries
- Fluconazole 150mg capsule

Gastrointestinal

- Constipation: lactose, senna, docusate, bisacodyl (tablets and suppositories), ispaghula husk, glycerine suppositories
- Diarrhoea: loperamide, rehydration sachets

Haemorrhoids (Cream and suppositories)

- Local anaesthetics and astringents: lidocaine, benzocaine, cinchocaine, zinc oxide
- Corticosteroids: hydrocortisone

Dermatology

- Emollients
- Corticosteroids for short courses (15g, 7 days treatment): Hydrocortisone 1% (*10 years and over), clobetasone (*12 years and over)
- Fungal treatments (topical): clotrimazole, miconazole, terbinafine, ketoconazole
- Fungal nail paints
- Warts and verrucas: salicylic acid, freeze treatment

Heartburn & Indigestion: Antacids and alginates

Cold Sore Treatments: Aciclovir

Teething & Mouth Ulcers

- Teething gels and pastes
- Mouth ulcer treatments

Head Lice and Threadworm treatments