

Medicines for Self-Care

People should be encouraged to self-care for minor self-limiting, short-term conditions by purchasing certain medicines and keeping a well-stocked medicine cabinet at home. Medicines required regularly for long-term conditions fall outside of this guidance. Licensing restrictions should always be considered when recommending patients to purchase items. The decision to prescribe over-the-counter (OTC) medicines sits with the individual prescriber. Under NHS regulations, prescribers should prescribe any medicines they feel are needed for a patient's medical care. A patient is entitled to a medicine that the prescriber believes is necessary, not those which the patient feels should be supplied on prescription¹. Exemptions from prescription charges, including prepayment certificates, do not constitute exemptions to this guidance. Please note that sales of medicines to pregnant women are restricted within their product license and some items will need to be prescribed.

| <u>Oral Medicines</u> | <u>Medicines Management Advice</u> | <u>Legal Sale Restrictions/ MHRA Product License Restrictions for general sale – if required for a condition outside of these license restrictions it must be prescribed (if applicable)</u> |
|---|--|---|
| Painkillers for adults: Paracetamol Ibuprofen Aspirin 300mg Co-codamol 8/500mg | Encourage patients to purchase and keep as part of a well-stocked medicine cabinet to manage short-term minor ailments (e.g. minor aches/pains; earache; headache/migraine; colds; fever; toothache; sore throat; musculoskeletal pain; sprains/strains; nasal congestion; recovery post-operation). | Paracetamol and Aspirin 300mg: 16 tablets can be purchased in supermarkets, and larger packs from pharmacies Ibuprofen: 16 x 200mg tablets can be purchased in supermarkets and larger packs from pharmacies Co-codamol 8/500mg: 32 tablets (max. 3 days' treatment) from pharmacies. Repeated requests will be referred to prescriber Naproxen: dysmenorrhoea in women aged 15-50. (Max 3 days treatment 9 x 250mg) |
| Painkillers suspensions: e.g. Calpol®/Nurofen® | Parents can buy to keep stock at home for when needed (e.g. teething, fever). | Paracetamol and Ibuprofen: Licensed post-immunisation from 2 months and for general use from 3 months |
| Cough/Cold mixtures | No clinical evidence of benefit but can be purchased. | Many remedies are unlicensed under 6 yrs. Some products are available for 6+ yrs. Information for parents available from http://child-cough.bristol.ac.uk/ |
| Anti-diarrhoeals for Adults | Can buy for acute episodes (less than 48 hours). | Can buy loperamide from supermarkets/pharmacies for 12+ yrs up to max 12mg/day. Oral rehydration sachets are available from pharmacies |
| Laxatives for Adults | Products can be purchased for when needed acutely. Provide dietary and lifestyle advice | Laxatives can be purchased for non-complicated, acute episodes of constipation. |
| Threadworm tablets | Can buy from the pharmacy | Mebendazole only available from pharmacies and for children 2+ years |
| Indigestion remedies (e.g. Gaviscon, ranitidine, omeprazole, pantoprazole) | Patients can purchase when needed. <u>Short term</u> use only over the counter (2-4 weeks) before needs to be assessed. | Ranitidine 16 years+ only, PPIs 18 years+ only. Gaviscon (and other antacids) varies, see products for details. Patients over 50 years old with symptoms for the first time will be referred to GP. Pregnant women can purchase antacids as required but must be aware of salt content. |
| Anti-histamines (e.g. cetirizine, loratadine, chlorphenamine, acrivastine) | Only prescribe for diagnosed chronic rhinitis and urticaria and for children <1 yr due to age-restricted sales. | Chlorphenamine (Piriton) oral solution for 1+yr; Loratadine oral solution for 2+yr; Cetirizine oral solution (brands vary in minimum age from between 2-6yrs). Acrivastine over 12 years only. Oral antihistamines cannot be sold to pregnant women. |
| Colic treatment | Infacol® and Colief® can be purchased OTC. | Licensed from birth. If symptoms are ongoing, advise patient to see GP |
| Vitamins and tonics | See BNSSG formulary for indications. | Can be purchased for non-formulary BNSSG indications, including low-dose vitamin D (400 units) and folic acid in pregnancy. Exclusions: Vitamin D analogues (e.g. alfacalcidol) or vitamins for treatment of a specified condition. |

Developed by BNSSG CCG Medicines Optimisation Team. Approved by BNSSG D&TC: May 2018 Review date: May 2020.

1. British Medical Association/General Practitioners Committee. Prescribing in general practice [Online]. 2013 May. Available from: <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/gp-practices/service-provision/prescribing/prescribing-and-dispensing>

| <u>Bandages/Appliances and external medicines</u> | <u>Medicines Management Advice</u> | <u>Legal Sale Restrictions/ MHRA Product License Restrictions for general sale – if required for a condition outside of these license restrictions it must be prescribed (if applicable)</u> |
|--|--|---|
| Topical analgesics, e.g ibuprofen gel, diclofenac gel, rubefaciants (e.g. Deep Heat) | Patients can purchase these products for short-term use if required. If indicated for a chronic condition these should be prescribed. Rubefaciants should not be prescribed | Diclofenac – OTC treatment limited to 7 days (14 days for 12 hour gel), can only be used for 14 years and over Ibuprofen - most products age limit of 12 years, some 14 years. |
| Fungal nail treatments | These have a low cure rate and can be purchased OTC. Various different products exist | Amorolfine -containing products may be purchased from pharmacies for the treatment of up to two nails for adults >18 years |
| Haemorrhoid treatments, e.g Anusol, Germoloids, Preparation H (available as creams/ ointments/ suppositories) | Treatments for simple haemorrhoids including astringents are available from pharmacies. Some products also contain hydrocortisone or local anaesthetics | Hydrocortisone -containing products are restricted to adults over 18. Most treatments for haemorrhoids only recommended over 18 years |
| Calamine Lotion; Antiseptic Creams, Plasters | These can be bought easily in supermarkets and pharmacies as part of self-care management for cuts/grazes to skin. | Pharmacist can advise about product choice. Calamine lotion can be purchased OTC for chickenpox |
| Anti-fungal creams/powders | These can be bought easily in supermarkets and pharmacies as part of self-care management for minor fungal infections | Exclusions: Lymphoedema or history of lower limb cellulitis, athlete's foot cannot be sold for patients with diabetes |
| Nappy rash/barrier creams | Nappy rash usually clears up after 3-7 days if recommended hygiene tips are followed. Patient can purchase as part of self-care management. | Pharmacist can advise. |
| Sun burn and sun protection | Patient can purchase sun protection products and moisturisers as part of self-care management. | Pharmacist can advise. Prescribe sunscreen products in conditions causing photosensitivity as detailed in the Drug Tariff |
| Minor burns/scalds | Advise patients to purchase antiseptic creams/burn treatments | More serious burns requiring professional medical attention (e.g. chemical, electrical, large, deep burns, and those causing white/charred skin or blisters on the face, hands, arms, feet, legs or genitals) |
| Bites and stings | Patients can purchase painkillers, creams and antihistamines over the counter. | Topical steroids cannot be sold OTC under 10 years of age, restrictions for antihistamines noted above |
| Cradle cap treatment | Usually clears up without treatment within weeks to a few months. Parents can purchase as part of self-care management. | Exception: If causing infant distress and not improving. |
| Dandruff | Patients should be encouraged to manage mild dandruff with long term over the counter treatments. | Pharmacist can advise. |
| Emollients and bath/shower products | Prescribe emollients only for long term dermatitis, eczema and psoriasis. Bath additives are non-formulary. Mild, irritant dermatitis should be managed using over the counter preparations. | Patient can purchase as part of self-care management. Topical corticosteroids – lower age limit of 10 years |
| Excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis) | Advise on lifestyle changes and purchasing over the counter high strength antiperspirants in mild to moderate cases. | Pharmacist can advise. |
| Head lice treatment | Recommend wet combing. Various products available from pharmacies. | Alcohol-based products are not recommended for patients with asthma/sensitive skin. Dimethicone licensed from 6 months |
| Minor acne treatment | Can buy wide range from supermarket/pharmacy. | Creams and washes are available. Benzoyl peroxide if >12 yrs |
| Aciclovir cream for cold sores | These can be bought easily in supermarkets and pharmacies for infrequent cold sores of the lip only . | Prescribe for immunocompromised patients, the terminally ill, and children <12 years. |
| Warts/verrucae | Can purchase. Prescribe in sexual health/ GUM and diabetes. | Sales licensed only for use on hands and feet |

| <u>Eye, ear, nose, mouth and throat</u> | <u>Medicines Management Advice</u> | <u>Legal Sale Restrictions/ MHRA Product License Restrictions for general sale – if required for a condition outside of these license restrictions it must be prescribed (if applicable)</u> |
|---|---|---|
| Bacterial conjunctivitis | Chloramphenicol 0.5% eye drops and 1% eye ointment can be purchased for adults and children over 2 following a review with the pharmacist | Patients with glaucoma should be referred to GP. Contact lens wearers should seek advice from optometrist or GP before treating |
| Dry/tired eyes | Patient can purchase eye drops as part of self-care management. Advise on good eyelid hygiene and avoiding environmental factors. | Hypromellose and other dry eye drops can easily be purchased over the counter for mild to moderate cases. Pharmacist can advise. |
| Corticosteroid nasal sprays | Corticosteroid nasal sprays are available over the counter for the treatment of seasonal allergic rhinitis for up to three months | Beclometasone 50mcg, fluticasone propionate 50mcg available OTC for adults aged over 18 years. |
| Antihistamine eye drops for hayfever | Eye drops available OTC contain sodium cromoglicate 2% , an antihistamine and/or a decongestant | Different products have different restrictions. Sodium cromoglicate can generally be purchased for use over the age of 6 years |
| Decongestant nasal sprays and tablets | Patient can purchase as part of self-care management. | Nasal sprays can be sold for 12+yrs for 1 week. Phenylephrine and pseudoephedrine tablets can both be sold for 12+yrs for 1 week (see BNF contra-indications). If long term issues, see GP |
| Sore throat lozenges/oral sprays/mouthwash/teething gels, mouth ulcers | Patient can purchase as part of self-care management. | Various different products with different licensing restrictions |
| Toothpaste/prevention of dental caries | Higher strength fluoride toothpaste and mouthwashes can be purchased over the counter. Dental products should be prescribed by dentists. | Refer patient to their dentist for further advice. Some high strength products (e.g. Duraphat® 2800ppm & 5000ppm) are prescription only and should only be prescribed by and under the advice of a dentist. |
| Ear wax drops | Patients can buy olive oil drops or other OTC products. | All ear wax removal products are available to buy. |

| <u>Oral Medicines</u> | <u>Medicines Management Advice</u> | <u>Legal Sale Restrictions/ MHRA Product License Restrictions for general sale – if required for a condition outside of these license restrictions it must be prescribed (if applicable)</u> |
|---|---|---|
| Vaginal Thrush Treatments (e.g. fluconazole 150mg capsules, clotrimazole cream or pessaries) | Can be purchased in combination with external creams (Clotrimazole 1%/2% and 500mg pessaries) | Can be purchased from 16-60 years old who are not pregnant or breastfeeding, have been previously diagnosed with thrush and have had fewer than 2 episodes in the last 6 months. Pregnant women and over 60s must be referred to GP. Male partners can also be treated OTC. |
| Oral thrush treatment | Miconazole oral gel can be sold OTC | Must not be sold to patients taking warfarin or other coumarins due to potentially fatal interaction increasing INR |
| Mild cystitis | Mild cases: those that are responsive to symptomatic treatment but will also clear up on their own. Patient can be signposted to OTC treatments if clinically appropriate (e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen, Cystopurin® sachets). | Patients should see their GP if red flags are present: symptoms that don't improve after 3 days of self-care measures, frequent cystitis, severe symptoms (e.g. blood in urine, develops a fever, loin pain or pain in side), in pregnancy, children. |
| Travel sickness treatments | Hyoscine hydrobromide, promethazine, cinnarizine (oral) and hyoscine patches all available OTC | Different age restrictions for different products; refer to pharmacy. Minimum age generally 4-5 years |

To contact Customer Services Team (formerly known as the Patient Advice Liaison Service):

Tel: 0117 900 2655 or 0800 073 0907. Email: bnssg.customerservice@nhs.net

Post: Customer Services Team, NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire CCG, South Plaza, Marlborough Street, Bristol, BS1 3NX.