

Changes to how the NHS prescribes 'over the counter' medicines for minor health conditions

In March 2018, NHS England published guidance about reducing the prescribing of medicines or treatments that are available to buy over the counter.

This means that certain medicines may no longer be prescribed if you can buy them 'over the counter'.

Probiotics, and some vitamins and minerals will also no longer be routinely prescribed, because most people can and should get these from eating a healthy, varied and balanced diet.

Why does the NHS want to reduce prescribing of these medicines?

The NHS has to make difficult choices about what it spends taxpayer money on and how much value the taxpayer is getting for that money. Medicines to treat these conditions are available to buy over the counter. Pharmacists can advise patients on self-care and also on which are the lowest cost versions of medicines available.

The financial situation in Harrow has been complex and of high concern for many years. By reducing the amount the NHS spends on treating these minor health conditions, the NHS can give priority to treatments for patients with more serious conditions such as cancer and mental health problems.

What are the benefits of going to the pharmacy instead of making an appointment to see your GP?

Pharmacists have the knowledge and skills to help with many healthcare conditions, and you don't need an appointment to speak to a pharmacist. Visiting a pharmacist first helps to make more GP appointments available for people with more complex healthcare needs.

If you have something more serious, the pharmacist is trained to signpost you quickly to the right medical care.

What can you do?

By keeping certain useful medicines at home you can treat common conditions immediately and you won't need to see a GP. The medicines you may want to keep at home could include:

- A painkiller to help treat minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and fever.
- Indigestion medicines, oral rehydration salts and treatments for constipation and diarrhoea.
- Treatments for seasonal conditions such as colds and hay fever.
- Sunblock and after sun.
- Some basic first aid items would also be useful.

If you have children make sure you also have products suitable for children.

Speak to your pharmacist for advice on what medicines to keep at home, where to store them safely and how to use your medicines.

Ensuring you have a well-balanced, healthy diet will mean most people don't need to take vitamin supplements or probiotics. If you do wish to take these products to avoid you becoming deficient, you can buy them from a pharmacy, a supermarket or online.

Where can you find more information and support?

- You can speak to a pharmacist who can help with advice and treatments for the conditions listed.
- NHS choices has lots of information and advice on treating minor health problems with self-care <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/home-remedies-for-common-conditions/>

If you have any questions about the items which are no longer going to be prescribed, do not contact the surgery, please contact: by Email: bhhcomplaints@nhs.net or Tel: 020 8966 1106 or In Writing: The Heights, 3rd Floor, 59-65 Lowlands Road, Harrow, HA1 3AW

What conditions are included in this change?

Medicines available to buy over the counter will not be routinely prescribed for the following 35 conditions:

Acute sore throat	Conjunctivitis	Coughs, colds and nasal congestion
Cradle cap	Dandruff	Diarrhoea (adults)
Dry eyes/sore tired eyes	Earwax	Excessive sweating
Haemorrhoids	Head lice	Indigestion and heartburn
Infant colic	Infrequent cold sores of the lip	Infrequent constipation
Infrequent migraine	Insect bites and stings	Mild acne
Minor burns and scalds	Mild cystitis	Mild dry skin
Mild irritant dermatitis	Mild to moderate hay fever	Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and fever (e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain)
Mouth ulcers	Nappy rash	Oral thrush
Prevention of tooth decay	Ringworm/athletes foot	Sunburn
Sun protection	Teething/mild toothache	Threadworms
Travel sickness	Warts and verrucae	

Examples of medications/items included in this change.

Antacids	Lubricants for dry eyes	Prescribable Sun Creams
Anti-histamines	Gluten-Free Food	Steroid nasal sprays
Anti-fungals	Mouthwash	Travel sickness tablets
Bath additives	Painkillers	Vitamins and supplements
Creams/Emollients for dry skin	Prescribable shampoos	Wart and verruca treatments