

Over the Counter Self Care Information for Healthcare Settings

In March 2018, NHS England published guidance for conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care. It listed 35 conditions plus probiotics and vitamins and minerals as areas where self care may be more appropriate. The NHSE guidance can be found [here](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/otc-guidance-for-ccgs.pdf).

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/otc-guidance-for-ccgs.pdf>

There were, however, some exceptions to this guidance these are listed below.

General exceptions to the guidance:

There are however, certain scenarios where patients should continue to have their treatments prescribed and these are outlined below:

1. Patients prescribed an OTC treatment for a long-term condition (e.g. regular pain relief for chronic arthritis or treatments for inflammatory bowel disease).
2. For the treatment of more complex forms of minor illnesses (e.g. severe migraines that are unresponsive to over the counter medicines).
3. For those patients that have symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor (i.e. those with red flag symptoms for example indigestion with very bad pain.)
4. Treatment for complex patients (e.g. immunosuppressed patients).
5. Patients on prescription only treatments.
6. Patients prescribed OTC products to treat an adverse effect or symptom of a more complex illness and/or prescription only medications should continue to have these products prescribed on the NHS.
7. **Circumstances where the product licence doesn't allow the product to be sold over the counter to certain groups of patients. This may vary by medicine, but could include babies, children and/or women who are pregnant or breast-feeding. Community Pharmacists will be aware of what these are and can advise accordingly.**
8. Patients with a minor condition suitable for self care that has not responded sufficiently to treatment with an OTC product.
9. Patients where the clinician considers that the presenting symptom is due to a condition that would not be considered a minor condition.
10. Individual patients where the clinician considers that their ability to self-manage is compromised as a consequence of medical, mental health or significant social vulnerability to the extent that their health and/or wellbeing could be adversely affected, if reliant on self-care. To note that being exempt from paying a prescription charge does not automatically warrant an exception to the guidance. Consideration should also be given to safeguarding issues.

This guide covers the licenced indications of products available over the counter and highlights where the licencing exceptions would prohibit self care.

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Definitions

- P** Product is “Pharmacy only” and can only be supplied under the supervision of a pharmacist
- GSL** Product is sold in general retail outlets without the supervision of a pharmacist
- MD** Medical device
- BS** Borderline substance as Part XV of the Drug Tariff
- NC** Not classified

Items of low clinical effectiveness

<p>Probiotics</p>	<p>There is currently insufficient clinical evidence to support prescribing of probiotics within the NHS for the treatment or prevention of diarrhoea of any cause. Exceptions ACBS approved indication or as per local policy (VSL#3 Probiotic Food 4.4g for Pouchitis). The ACBS recommends some foods and toilet preparations which may be regarded as drugs for the treatment of specified conditions. If a doctor is satisfied that the product can be safely prescribed, that patients will be adequately monitored and have access to hospital supervision if needed, they can prescribe these products on a prescription endorsed with "ACBS".</p>
<p>Vitamins and Minerals</p>	<p>There is insufficient high-quality evidence to demonstrate the clinical effectiveness of vitamins and minerals.</p> <p>Vitamins and minerals are essential nutrients which most people can and should get from eating a healthy, varied and balanced diet. In most cases, dietary supplementation is unnecessary.</p> <p>Many vitamin and mineral supplements are classified as foods and not medicines; they therefore do not have to go through the strict criteria laid down by the Medicines and Health Regulatory Authority (MHRA) to confirm their quality, safety and efficacy before reaching the market. It is therefore not deemed appropriate for such preparations to be routinely funded on the NHS.</p> <p>Any prescribing not in-line with listed exceptions should be discontinued.</p> <p>This guidance does not apply to Healthy Start Vitamins, but these are not currently prescribed on NHS prescription.</p> <p>Exceptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medically diagnosed deficiency, including for those patients who may have a lifelong or chronic condition or have undergone surgery that results in malabsorption. Continuing need should however be reviewed on a regular basis. NB maintenance or preventative treatment is not an exception • Calcium and vitamin D for osteoporosis • Malnutrition including alcoholism (see NICE guidance) • Patients suitable to receive Healthy start vitamins for pregnancy or children between the ages 6 months to their fourth birthday. (NB this is not on prescription but commissioned separately)

Self-limiting conditions

Minor Condition	Exceptions	Drug	Example of Items available (not an exhaustive list)	Price (Based on C+D monthly price list May 2018)	OTC Restrictions	Classification
Acute Sore Throat	"Red Flag Symptoms"	Flurbiprofen Loz 8.75mg	Strefen honey and lemon	£4.15 (16)	< 12 years Last trimester of pregnancy Severe heart failure, severe renal failure or severe hepatic failure	P
		Amylmetacresol 0.6mg 2,4-Dichlorobenzyl alcohol 1.2mg	Strepsils Loz Honey & Lem	£2.99 (16) £3.99 (24)	< 6 years	GSL
		Tyrothricin EP 1mg Benzocaine BP/EP 5mg	Tyrozets Lozenges	£4.35 (24)	< 3 years	P
		Dequalinium Chlor Loz 250mcg	Dequadin lozenges	£2.99 (20) £4.49 (40)	< 10 years	P
		Benzydamine 0.15%	Difflam Oral Rinse Solution 0.15%	£11.19 (300ml)	< 12 years Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P
		Benzydamine 0.15%	Difflam P/Spy 0.15% 30ml	£6.99 (30)		
		Infrequent cold sores of the lip	Immunocompromised patients "Red Flag Symptoms"	Aciclovir Crm 5%	Zovirax	£7.13 (2g) pump £6.60 (2g)
Penciclovir	Fenistil Cold Sore Cream 1%			£6.00 (2g)		
Cradle Cap (Seborrhoeic dermatitis – infants)	If causing distress to the infant and not improving	Salicylic acid 0.5% Coconut oil 1% Distilled coal tar 1%	Capasal Therapeutic Shampoo	£7.51 (250ml)	Spread to face Broken or inflamed scalp	P
Conjunctivitis	"Red Flag Symptoms"	Chloramphenicol 0.5%	Optrex eye drops	Generic £4.00 (10ml) Optrex £5.49 (10ML)	< 2 years Pregnant Breastfeeding	P
		Chloramphenicol 1%	Optrex eye ointment	Optrex £4.99 (4g) Generic £3.50 (4g)		
		Sodium Cromoglicate	Optrex allergy 2%	£4.50 (10ml)	< 6 years	P

Minor Condition	Exceptions	Drug	Example of Items available (not an exhaustive list)	Price (Based on C+D monthly price list May 2018)	OTC Restrictions	Classification
Cystitis (Mild)	"Red Flag Symptoms"	Potassium citrate	Cystopurin Gran Sachet 7g (Cranberry)	£5.35(6)	< 6 years History of kidney disease Pregnancy Breastfeeding Men	GSL
Coughs and colds and nasal congestion	"Red Flag Symptoms"	Codeine Phosphate	Codeine Phosphate Linctus 15mg/5ml	£2.80 (100ml)	Most pharmacies will not sell codeine linctus due to high abuse potential. Not recommended to advise patient to use this treatment.	P
		Pholcodine	Pholcodine Linctus 5mg/5ml	£2.90 (100ml)	<6 year	
		Citric acid monohydrate	Simple Linctus	£1.80 (200ml)	<12 year	GSL
		Xylomet HCl Nsl Spy 0.1% 10ml	Otrivine	£4.19 (10ml)	<12 years Patient who have had a trans-sphenoidal hypophysectomy Had surgery exposing the dura mater Hypertension Cardiovascular disease Hyperthyroidism Narrow angle glaucoma Diabetes	
Haemorrhoids	"Red Flag Symptoms"	Zinc oxide Benzyl benzoate Bismuth oxide Bismuth subgallate Balsam peru Hydrocortisone acetate	Anusol HC Ointment Anusol HC Suppository	£5.72 (15g) £5.72 (12)	< 18years Pregnancy Breastfeeding Rectal bleeding or blood in stools Tubercular, fungal and most viral lesions including herpes simplex, vaccinia and varicella	P
		Zinc oxide Bismuth oxide Balsam peru	Anusol Cream Anusol Ointment Anusol Suppository	£4.21 (23g), £6.31 (43g) £4.21 (25g) £3.89 (12)		GSL

Minor Condition	Exceptions	Drug	Example of Items available (not an exhaustive list)	Price (Based on C+D monthly price list May 2018)	OTC Restrictions	Classification
Infant Colic	"Red Flag Symptoms"	Lactase	Colief Infant Drops	£15.99 (7ml)	>4 months presenting with colic for the first time. ACBS classification - For the relief of symptoms associated with lactose intolerance in infants, provided that lactose intolerance is confirmed by the presence of reducing substances and/or excessive acid in stools, a low concentration of the corresponding disaccharide enzyme on intestinal biopsy or by breath hydrogen test or lactose intolerance test. For dosage and administration details, consult product literature.	BS

Minor illnesses suitable for Self-Care

Minor Condition	Exceptions	Drug	Example of Items available (not an exhaustive list)	Price (Based on C+D monthly price list May 2018)	OTC Restrictions	Classification
Constipation (Infrequent)	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Docusate Sodium	Dioctyl 100mg Capsules	£4.20 (30)	Abdominal pain Nausea and vomiting Intestinal obstruction < 12 years	P
		Ispaghula husk	Fybogel Gran Sachet 3.5g Orange G/F S/F	£4.46 (30)	< 6 years Intestinal obstruction Faecal impaction Reduction of gut motility Colonic atony such as senile megacolon	
Diarrhoea (Adults)	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	potassium chloride sodium chloride glucose disodium hydrogen citrate	Dioralyte Paediatric Sachet	£3.86 (6) £11.52 (20)	< 2 years Liver or kidney disease Patients on low sodium/potassium diets Diabetic	GSL P
		Loperamide	Imodium Instant Melts Orodispersible Tab 2mg	£7.84 (12) £10.48 (18)	< 12 years IBD Post bowel surgery Post pelvic radiation Colorectal cancer	P
Dandruff	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Coal Tar 5%	Alphosyl Shampoo 2 In 1	£5.49 (150ml) £6/99 (250ml)	< 12 years Inflamed or broken skin	GSL
			Neutrogena T/Gel Therapeutic Shampoo 2%	6.25 (125ml) 9.92 (250ml)		
		Ketoconazole 2%	Dandrazol Anti-Dandruff Shampoo 2%	£5.74 (60ml) £8.87 (100ml)	Adults and adolescents only	
		Benzalkonium chloride 0.5% w/w	Dermax Therapeutic Shampoo 0.5%	£10.24 (250ml)	Not infants	P
		Coal tar 12%	Sebco Ointment	£11.16 (40g) £21.01 (100g)	< 12 years	GSL
	Selenium Sulfide	Selsun shampoo 2.5%	2.85 (50ml) 3.87 (100ml) 5.50 (150ml)	< 5 years Inflamed or broken skin	P	

Minor Condition	Exceptions	Drug	Example of Items available (not an exhaustive list)	Price (Based on C+D monthly price list May 2018)	OTC Restrictions	Classification
Dry Eyes/Sore tired Eyes	If the patient has co-existing ocular conditions such as glaucoma, this would require medical input	Carbomer 980 0.2%	Gel tears Viscotears	£3.00 (10g) £4.89 (10g)	< 18 years Glaucoma	P
		Carmellose Sodium 1%	Celluvisc Eye Dps 0.5% 0.4ml Ud	£4.90 (30)	Glaucoma	
		Sodium Hyaluronate 0.15% PF	HyabakSod Hyaluronate Eye Drops 10ml P/F	£9.99 (10ml)	Glaucoma	NC
Contact Dermatitis	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Clobet But Crm 0.05%	Eumovate eczema and dermatitis 0.05% cream	£6.69 (15g)	< 12 years Broken or inflamed skin Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P
		Crotamiton 10%	Eurax Cream 10%	£3.99 (30g) £6.96 (100g)	< 3 years Broken or weeping skin near eyes	GSL
		coal tar solution 5% v/w.	Exorex Lotion	£15.27 (100ml) £30.58 (250ml)	No restriction	
		Hydrocortisone	Hydrocort Cream 1%	£2 (15g)	< 10 years Use on the eyes and face, ano-genital region, Broken or infected skin including cold sores, acne and athlete's foot.	P
		Hydrocortisone	Hydrocortisone Ointment 1%	£3.49 (15g)		
Earwax	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Arachis oil Chlorobutanol hemihydrate	Cerumol Ear Drops	£3.65 (11ml)	<1 years Perforated eardrum	P
		Olive Oil	Olive Oil Liquid	£2.60 (10 ml)	<1 years Perforated eardrum	MD
		Urea hydrogen peroxide	Otex Ear Drops 5%	£4.75 (8ml)	Perforated eardrum	P
Excessive sweating (Hyperhidrosis)	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Alum Chlor Soln 20%	Driclor	£5.77 (20ml) £5.41 (75ml)	No restrictions	P

Minor Condition	Exceptions	Drug	Example of Items available (not an exhaustive list)	Price (Based on C+D monthly price list May 2018)	OTC Restrictions	Classification
Hay fever/ Allergic Rhinitis (Mild to Moderate)	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Beclometasone dipropionate	Beclomet Diprop Nasal Spy 50mcg (200 D)	£7.99 (100) £10.99 (180)	< 18 years	GSL P
		Cetirizine	Cetirizine HCl Tab 10mg	£2.50 (30)	< 12 years Epilepsy Renal impairment	P
Head lice	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Malathion Aq Lot 0.5%	Derbac M	£5.99 (50ml) £13.99 (200ml)	< 6 months Sores on the scalp Concurrent scalp conditions such as psoriasis.	P
		Permethrin Crm 1%	Lyclear crème rinse	£6.49 (59ml) £10.49 (Twin pack)	< 6 months Concurrent scalp conditions such as psoriasis.	
Indigestion and Heartburn	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Sodium Alginate Potassium bicarbonate	Gaviscon Advance Liquid (Reckitt)	£4.99 (150ml) £8.99(300ml)	< 12 years Renal failure Hypercalcaemia Nephrocalcinosis Kidney stones	GSL P
		Sodium alginate Magnesium alginate	Gaviscon Infant Sachet 2g (Dual Pack) S/F	£7.89 (15)	Not to be used in premature infants or infants <1 Children > 2 Renal impairment	
		Sodium Bicarbonate Sodium Alginate Calcium Carbonate	Peptac Liquid (Peppermint) S/F	£3.89 (500ml)	< 6 years Sodium restricted diet	
Insect bites and stings	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Zinc oxide Calamine	Calamine lotion	£1.58 (200ml)	Broken or infected skin	GSL
Migraine (Infrequent)	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Prochlorperazine	Buccastem M Tab 3mg	£7.25 (8)	<18 years Impaired liver function Existing blood dyscrasias Epilepsy Parkinson's Disease Prostatic hypertrophy Narrow angle glaucoma	P
		Paracetamol, Codeine and buclizine	Migravele Pink Tab	£6.58 (12)	< 12 years Renal or hepatic dysfunction	

Minor Condition	Exceptions	Drug	Example of Items available (not an exhaustive list)	Price (Based on C+D monthly price list May 2018)	OTC Restrictions	Classification
Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and/fever. (e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain)	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Paracetamol Codeine	Co-Codamol Tab 8mg/500mg	£1.50 (32)	<12 years Severe liver disease Breastfeeding Pregnancy	P
		Ibuprofen	Ibuprofen Gel 5%	£4.34 (30g) £6.08 (50g) £11.18 (100g)	<12 years Asthma pregnant Breastfeeding Broken/infected skin	
		Ibuprofen	Ibuprofen Gel 10%	£5.57 (30g) £7.61 (50g)		GSL
		Ibuprofen	Ibuprofen Tab 400mg	£1.50 (4)	<12 years Stomach ulcers Cardiac, renal or hepatic impairment Unstable hypertension Asthma	
		Paracetamol	Paracetamol Oral Suspension 250mg/5ml S/F	£1.00 (200ml)	< 6 years severe renal or severe hepatic impairment	P
		Paracetamol	Paracetamol Tab 500mg	59p (32)	< 10 years severe renal or severe hepatic impairment	
Mild Dry Skin	See earlier for general exceptions	Active colloidal oatmeal	Aveeno Cream	£6.80 (100ml) £13.67 (300ml) £14.46 (500ml)	< 3 months	BS
		White Soft Paraffin Light Liquid Paraffin	Cetaben Cream	£4.99 (50ml) £7.99 (200ml)	< 1 year	MD
		Benzalkonium Chloride Chlorhexidine Dihydrochloride Liquid Paraffin Isopropyl Myristate	Dermol 500 Lotion	£10.88 (500ml)	No restrictions	P
		White Soft Paraffin Light Liquid Paraffin	Diprobace Cream	£3.99 (50g)	No restrictions	GSL
		Anhydrous Lanolin White Soft Paraffin Light Liquid Paraffin	E45 Cream	£2.49 (50g) £4.49 (125g) £8.49 (350g)	No restrictions	
		Urea	Flexitol 25% Urea Heel Balm	5.69 (56g) 9.50 (112g)	< 12 years	MD
		Liquid paraffin	Zerobase Cream	£1.95 (50g) £9.86 (500g)	Not infants	GSL
		Isopropyl Myristate Liquid Paraffin	Doublebase Gel	£4.77 (100g) £10.50 (500g)	No restrictions	P

Minor Condition	Exceptions	Drug	Example of Items available (not an exhaustive list)	Price (Based on C+D monthly price list May 2018)	OTC Restrictions	Classification
Mild acne	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Benzoyl Per Gel 5%	Acnecide gel	£9.99 (30g) £19.95 (60g)	< 12 years old Large area of skin Pregnancy, breastfeeding Damaged skin Elderly	P
Mouth ulcers	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Hydrocort_Mucoad h Buccal Tab 2.5mg S/F	Hydrocortisone Buccal Tab 2.5mg S/F	£13.86 (20)	< 12 years	P
Nappy Rash	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Benzalkonium chloride (0.1% w/w) dimeticone (22.0% w/w).	Conotrane Cream	£1.58 (100g) £6.32 (500g)	No restrictions	GSL
		Zinc oxide Ph.Eur 15.25% Benzyl alcohol BP 0.39% Benzyl benzoate BP 1.01% Benzyl cinnamate 0.15% (Lanolin (hypoallergenic) 4.00%	Sudocrem Antiseptic Healing Cream	£6.29 (250g) £8.99 (400g)	No restrictions	
Oral Thrush	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Miconazole Oromucosal Gel 20mg/g S/F	Daktarin 2% oral gel	£5.99 (15g)	< 4 months Pregnancy Breastfeeding Taking warfarin or interacting drugs Liver dysfunction	P
Sunburn due to excessive sun exposure	See earlier for general exceptions	Zinc oxide Calamine	After sun products, Calamine lotion	£1.58 (200ml)	No restrictions	GSL

Minor Condition	Exceptions	Drug	Example of Items available (not an exhaustive list)	Price (Based on C+D monthly price list May 2018)	OTC Restrictions	Classification
Ringworm/ Athletes foot	Lymphoedema or history of lower limb cellulitis . See earlier for general exceptions	Clotrimazole	Clotrimazole Cream 1%	3.50 (20g)	Nail infections	P
		Hydrocortisone/ Clotrimazole	Canesten HC	£6.49 (15g)	< 10 years Broken skin Face, eyes, mouth or mucous membranes	
		Hydrocort/Miconazole Nitrate	Daktacort hydrocortisone cream	5.20 (15g)	Tubercular or viral infections of the skin Broken skin Face, eyes, mouth or mucous membranes On anticoagulants	
		Miconazole 2%	Daktarin 2% cream	£4.09 (15g)	Diabetic Pregnant Breastfeeding	
		Terbinafine	Lamisil 1% cream	£6.25 (15g)	< 16 years Diabetic Pregnant Breastfeeding	
Scalds & Burns (Minor)	See earlier for general exceptions. No routine exceptions have been identified. However more serious burns always require professional medical attention. Burns requiring hospital A&E treatment include but are not limited to: a) all chemical and electrical burns; b) large or deep burns; c) burns that cause white or charred skin; d) Burns on the face, hands, arms, feet, legs or genitals that cause blisters.	povidone iodine	Betadine dry powder spray	£13.70 (100ml)	<2 years old Patients on lithium therapy	GSL

Minor Condition	Exceptions	Drug	Example of Items available (not an exhaustive list)	Price (Based on C+D monthly price list May 2018)	OTC Restrictions	Classification
Prevention of dental caries	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Chlorhexidine	Corsodyl Mouthwash (Mint) 0.2%	£5.35 (300ml) £8.99(600ml)	< 12 years	GSL
Sunscreens	ACBS - Anthelios® XL SPF 50+ Melt-in cream; Sensense® Ultra; Uvistat® Lipscreen SPF 50; and Uvistat® Suncream SPF 30 and 50 (see Borderline substances) cannot be prescribed on the NHS except for skin protection against ultraviolet radiation in abnormal cutaneous photosensitivity resulting from genetic disorders or photodermatoses, including vitiligo and those resulting from radiotherapy; chronic or recurrent herpes simplex labialis. Preparations with SPF less than 30 should not normally be prescribed.	Various ingredients	Sensense Ultra Lot Spf 50+	£9.28 (50ml) £14.96 (125ml) £33.01 (500ml)	No restrictions	BS
Teething/ Mild toothache	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Benzocaine Gel 20%	Orajel	£5.25 (5.3g)	Not for use in children below the age of 12 years Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P
		Lidocaine 0.33% Cetalkonium chloride 0.01%	Bonjela Teething Gel	£3.99 (15)	Not recommended for infants under five months. Heart disease Liver disease	P

Minor Condition	Exceptions	Drug	Example of Items available (not an exhaustive list)	Price (Based on C+D monthly price list May 2018)	OTC Restrictions	Classification
Travel Sickness	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Hyoscine Hydrobomide	Kwells 150mcg tablet	£2.68 (12)	< 4 years Glaucoma Paralytic ileus Pyloric stenosis Prostatic enlargement Myasthenia gravis	P
		Hyoscine Hydrobomide	Kwells 300mcg tablet	£2.68 (12)		
Threadworms	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Mebendazole Oral Susp 100mg/5ml Mebendazole 100mg tablets	Ovex Suspension Ovex Tablets	£11.00 (30ml)	< 2 years Pregnancy Breastfeeding	P
Warts and Verrucae	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions	Lactic Acid/Salic Acid_Paint 16.7/16.7%	Salactol wart paint	£2.74 (10ml)	Diabetic Face, neck, anogenital area Moles, birthmarks, hairy warts or skin lesions Broken skin Impaired peripheral blood circulation	P

References and acknowledgements

Policy on Prescribing of Medicines that are Available for Purchase (Self care) Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group August 2017

https://midessexccg.nhs.uk/your-health-services/medicines-optimisation/self_care-materials

NHS England Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs. April 2018

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