

## Medicines Optimisation Position Statement

Position Statement	<b>Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care</b>
Position Statement number	003
Approved by Medicines Optimisation Group	June 2023
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### Summary of prescribing principles

By reducing spend on treating conditions that are self-limiting or which lend themselves to self-care, or on items for which there is little evidence of clinical effectiveness, these resources can be used for other higher priority areas that have a greater impact for patients, support improvements in services and/or deliver transformation that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the NHS.

Guidance from NHS England and NHS Clinical Commissioners<sup>1</sup> (under s14Z10 and S2 of NHS Act 2006) was issued to support CCGs in their decision-making, to address unwarranted variation, and to provide clear national advice to make local prescribing practices more equitable and effective.

This guidance is not intended to discourage patients from seeking medical help when it is appropriate to do so, but to encourage people to self-care for minor illnesses as the first stage of treatment. If symptoms are not improving or responding to treatment, patients should be encouraged to seek further advice. Research shows that in many cases, people can take care of their minor conditions if they are provided with the right information; thereby releasing healthcare professionals to focus on patients with more complex and/or serious health concerns. Experience with self-care builds confidence in patients, with 84 per cent choosing to self-care for new episodes.

NHS England expects this guidance to be taken into account when formulating local policies unless there is a valid reason to do otherwise, and for prescribers to reflect local policies in their prescribing practice. Considering the results of local and national consultation and NHS England guidance, Frimley ICB has agreed to adopt all the national recommendations. This guidance applies to all patients, including those who would be exempt from paying prescription charges. Over the counter products will no longer be prescribed for the 35 minor conditions and two items of limited clinical effectiveness, unless defined as an exception as listed below.

### Signposting people to the right service

A wide range of information is available to the public about health promotion and the management of minor self-limiting and self-treatable illnesses, including Healthier Together<sup>ii</sup> which includes local advice and support to help manage and improve the health and wellbeing of babies, children and young people. Many community pharmacies are open extended hours including weekends and offer advice on the management of minor conditions and lifestyle interventions. Taking account of local Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA), areas within Frimley ICB have previously undertaken consultation, supported by a range of patient information leaflets and posters, widely have communicated the changes.

**Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS)**<sup>iii</sup> is an advanced service offered in many local Frimley pharmacies, which connects patients who have a minor illness with a community pharmacy. The CPCS aims to relieve pressure on the wider NHS by connecting patients with community pharmacy, which should be their first port of call and can deliver a swift, convenient and effective service to meet their needs. General practices, NHS 111, NHS 111 online, providers of urgent and emergency including 999 can refer patients for a minor illness consultation via CPCS. Follow link for list of symptoms identified for CPCS<sup>iv</sup>

### **Items of limited clinical effectiveness**

Probiotics

Vitamins and minerals – exceptions include medically diagnosed deficiency (not maintenance or preventative use), calcium and vitamin D for osteoporosis, malnutrition including alcoholism, vitamins recommended for premature babies on discharge from hospital for a time limited period.

- Healthy start vitamins for pregnancy and children aged 6months – 4 years can be obtained free of charge and are not prescribed (commissioned separately)
- Thiamine & vitamin B supplementation for alcoholism - see RMOC position statement<sup>v</sup>, MOG 007<sup>vi</sup> Prescribing of vitamin B complex is not supported and Frimley Guidance Summary: Vitamin B Complex Prescribing in Primary Care<sup>vii</sup>
- Vitamin D prescribing – treatment doses for vitamin D deficiency can be prescribed; maintenance doses should be purchased OTC, see Frimley adult vitamin D pathway<sup>viii</sup>

### **Self-limiting conditions**

Acute sore throat

Infrequent cold sores of the lip

Conjunctivitis

Coughs and colds and nasal congestion

Cradle Cap (seborrhoeic dermatitis – infants)

Haemorrhoids

Infant Colic

Mild Cystitis

### **Minor conditions suitable for self- care**

Mild Irritant Dermatitis

Dandruff

Diarrhoea (Adults)

Dry Eyes/Sore tired Eyes

Earwax

Excessive sweating (Hyperhidrosis)

Head Lice

Indigestion and Heartburn

Infrequent Constipation

Infrequent Migraine

Insect bites and stings

Mild Acne

Mild Dry Skin

Sunburn due to excessive sun exposure

Sun Protection

Mild to Moderate Hay fever/Seasonal Rhinitis

Minor burns and scalds

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 dental caries  
Ringworm/Athletes foot  
Teething/Mild toothache  
Threadworms  
Travel Sickness  
Warts and Verrucae

The guideline does not override a prescriber's clinical judgement and professional duties when considering whether it is acceptable to ask a patient to buy their medication.

**Exceptions.** There will be certain scenarios where patients should continue to have their treatments prescribed. Prescribers should be aware that exceptions to this policy may include people who are housebound, socially vulnerable, living with disability and care home residents.

**Specific exceptions** are included (if applicable) under the relevant item and/or condition.

### **General exceptions to the guidance.**

N.B. For vitamins, minerals, probiotics and those self-limiting conditions where there is limited evidence of clinical effectiveness for the treatments used (e.g., OTC items for cough, sore throat and infant colic), then the general exceptions do not apply.

- OTC treatment prescribed for a long-term condition (e.g., regular pain relief for chronic arthritis or treatments for inflammatory bowel disease).
- For the treatment of more complex forms of minor illnesses (e.g., severe migraines that are unresponsive to over the counter medicines).
- For 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.)
- Treatment for complex patients (e.g., immunosuppressed patients).
- Patients on prescription only treatments.
- Patients prescribed OTC products to treat an adverse effect or symptom of a more complex illness and/or prescription only medications.
- 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 breastfeeding. Check PrescQIPP Over the counter items - GP guide to self care<sup>ix</sup> for scenarios where patients should continue to have their treatments prescribed.
- Patients with a minor condition suitable for self-care that has not responded sufficiently to treatment with an OTC product.
- Patients where the clinician considers that the presenting symptom is due to a condition that would not be considered a minor condition.
- Circumstances where the prescriber believes that in their clinical judgement, exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the recommendation to self-care.
- Individual patients where the clinician considers that their ability to self-manage is compromised because 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.

<sup>i</sup> [NHS England » Guidance on conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care](#) accessed may 2023.

<sup>ii</sup> [Home :: Frimley HealthierTogether \(frimley-healthiertogether.nhs.uk\)](#)

<sup>iii</sup> [Community Pharmacist Consultation Service \(CPCS\) - Community Pharmacy England \(cpe.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>iv</sup> [NHS England » CPCS specification](#) updated May 2023.

<sup>v</sup> [RMOC- position-statement-oral-vitamin-B-supplementation-in-alcoholism-v1.0-1.pdf \(sps.nhs.uk\)](#)

<sup>vi</sup> [Frimley Prescribing of vitamin B complex \(vitamin B compound\)](#)

<sup>vii</sup> [Frimley Guidance Summary: Vitamin B Complex Prescribing in Primary Care](#)

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viii [Frimley Adult Vitamin D Pathway](#)

ix [PrescQIPP Over the counter items - GP guide to self care](#)