



Birmingham and Solihull
Clinical Commissioning Group

Medicines Extra

From the Medicines Management
and Optimisation Team

Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care - Birmingham and Solihull CCG policy

Welcome

Medicines Extra newsletters are produced by the Birmingham and Solihull CCG Medicines Management and Optimisation team to provide information about a single topic.

Background

In March 2018, following national consultation, NHS England and NHS Clinical Commissioners (NHSCC) published [guidance for CCGs](#) on conditions for which over the counter (OTC) items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care. These fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Prescriptions for a condition that is considered to be self-limiting and so does not need treatment as it will heal or be cured of its own accord
- Prescriptions for a condition which lends itself to self-care i.e. the person suffering does not normally need to seek medical advice and can manage the condition by purchasing OTC items directly
- Prescriptions for items for which there is little evidence of clinical effectiveness

Birmingham and Solihull CCG has subsequently developed its own [policy](#), based on the NHSE/NHSCC guidance, which is available on the [public area of the CCG website](#) and applies to commissioners, GPs, service providers and clinical staff treating registered patients of the CCG.

In the financial year 2017/18, the Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) spent approximately £15.7 million on prescriptions for medicines which could otherwise be purchased over the counter (OTC) from a pharmacy and/or other outlets such as petrol stations or supermarkets. In addition to this prescribing cost, there is also the cost of GP/nurse appointment and practice administration time. By reducing prescribing in line with this new policy, 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.

Which items / conditions are included in the policy?

It is important to note that the majority of recommended restrictions on prescribing are based on the **type and severity of condition rather than products**. The policy covers:

Medicines of limited clinical effectiveness:

- Probiotics
- Vitamins and minerals

Self-limiting conditions which will normally resolve without treatment:

- Acute sore throat
- Infrequent cold sores of the lip
- Conjunctivitis
- Coughs and colds and nasal congestion
- Cradle cap
- 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
- 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, headaches, period pain, back pain)
- Mouth ulcers
- Nappy rash
- Oral thrush
- Prevention of dental caries
- Ringworm/athlete's foot
- Teething/mild toothache
- Threadworms
- Travel sickness
- Warts and verrucae

The CCG policy is intended to encourage people to self-care for minor illnesses as the first stage of treatment. It is envisioned that in most cases (unless specified) these minor conditions will clear up and/or symptoms will be relieved with appropriate self-care. If symptoms are not improving or responding to treatment, then patients should be encouraged to seek further advice.

Are there any exceptions?

This policy applies to all patients, including those who would be exempt from paying prescription charges, unless they fall under one or more of the exceptions outlined below (see policy for full details and examples):

General exceptions:

- Patients prescribed an OTC medicine for a long-term condition
- For the treatment of more complex forms of minor illnesses
- For those patients that have symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor
- Treatment for complex patients (e.g. immunosuppressed patients)
- Patients prescribed OTC medicines to treat an adverse effect or symptom of a more complex illness and/or prescription only medication
- Circumstances where the product licence doesn't allow the product to be sold over the counter to certain groups of patients e.g. women who are pregnant or breast-feeding. Community Pharmacists will be aware of what these are and can advise accordingly.
- 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 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. Consideration should also be given to safeguarding issues.

Note: These general exceptions do not apply for vitamins, minerals, probiotics and those self-limiting conditions (e.g. infant colic, cough), where there is limited evidence of clinical effectiveness for the OTC treatments used.

Condition specific exceptions:

There are also some condition specific exceptions set out in the policy. E.g. vitamins are allowed in certain circumstances, including the treatment of a medically diagnosed deficiency (but not maintenance unless there is a lifelong/chronic condition or surgery which results in malabsorption).

Prescribers should refer to the policy for the details of specific exceptions.

What resources are available to support the implementation of this policy?

Resources for use in GP practices will be available:

Your Prescribing Support Pharmacist can show you where to access these:

- Poster and patient information leaflet (printed and electronic versions)
- Information for practice website, newsletters and waiting room information screens
- 'Non-prescription' forms for use in consultations
- Information letter for schools/nurseries
- ScriptSwitch messages where appropriate
- The self-care forum [fact sheets](#) on some minor conditions

In addition to these resources:

- The policy is published on the public area of the CCG website
- The policy will be linked on the Birmingham, Sandwell, Solihull and environs Area Prescribing Committee (APC) formulary website
- The policy has been highlighted to local schools, community pharmacy, dentists and opticians via a letter from the CCG
- The Local Medical Committees have been advised of the policy
- The policy will be publicised via the CCGs social media accounts
- The NHS has a [national website](#), which provides information for patients

Next steps:

Prescribing Leads at each practice should ensure that all prescribers are aware of the policy. The majority of recommendations will be implemented over time, with the long-term aim of reducing prescribing and GP appointment time for these conditions.

As a consequence of a small number of recommendations, a review of existing prescribing may be necessary e.g. patients on vitamin D for prevention of deficiency who don't have a chronic medical condition leading to malabsorption and patients receiving treatment for hayfever. Your Prescribing Support Pharmacist can support practices to identify these patients.

[Print PDF here](#) 

Contacts:

- Kate Arnold, Deputy Clinical Director, Medicines Management and Optimisation: kate.arnold@nhs.net
- Angela Barker, Prescribing Support Pharmacist: angela.barker@nhs.net
- Fiona Beadle, Prescribing Support Pharmacist: fiona.beadle@nhs.net
- Liz Thomas, Head of Medicines and Prescribing, Birmingham North, East and West: lizthomas1@nhs.net
- Nilima Rahman-Lais, Head of Medicines and Prescribing, South Central and West.: nrahman-lais@nhs.net

You can sign your colleagues up to the newsletter [here](#).



Copyright © 2018, Birmingham and Solihull CCG, All rights reserved.

You are receiving this email because you are a part of NHS Birmingham and Solihull CCG.

Our mailing address is:

NHS Birmingham and Solihull CCG

Floor Four

Attwood Green Health Centre

Birmingham, B15 1LZ

United Kingdom

[Add us to your address book](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

This email was sent to nicola.lawrence2@nhs.net

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

NHS Birmingham and Solihull CCG · Bartholomew House · 142 Hagley Road · Birmingham, B16 9PA · United Kingdom