

Changes to Berkshire West CCG routine prescribing for over the counter medicines

FROM 1 OCTOBER 2018 - Berkshire West GP practices are no longer routinely prescribing a range of over the counter (OTC) medicines and vitamins associated with minor ailments and short term conditions. This was confirmed at the Berkshire West CCG GP Medicines Optimisation Committee on 26 September 2018. The link to the CCG website is:

<https://www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk/newsroom/news/posts/2018/september/changes-to-berkshire-west-ccg-routine-prescribing-for-over-the-counter-medicines>

This follows a [national consultation](#) and subsequent [NHS England guidance](#) recommending that a range of over the counter medicines, associated with short term conditions and minor ailments, are no longer available on an NHS prescription.

In the year prior to June 2017, the NHS spent approximately £569 million on prescriptions for medicines which can be purchased over the counter from a pharmacy and other outlets such as supermarkets.

Medicines which will no longer be routinely prescribed include treatments for colds, coughs, dandruff, mild acne, nappy rash, warts and verrucae, head lice and mild dry skin. Please see over for the list of conditions.

The new over the counter medicines guidance will limit the routine prescribing of products that are for:

- A self-limiting condition, which does not require any medical advice or treatment as it will get better on its own, such as sore throats, coughs and colds
- A condition that is suitable for self-care, which can be treated with items that can easily be purchased over the counter from a pharmacy or other outlet, such as indigestion, mouth ulcers and warts and verrucae.

However in line with National [guidance](#), this will not affect prescribing of over the counter items for longer term or more complex conditions or where minor illnesses are symptomatic or a side effect of something more serious.

Patients are also encouraged to have a supply of essential medicines at home so they can quickly treat common conditions and therefore avoid any unnecessary and inconvenient trips to their GP. A list of useful medicines to have at home is available on [NHS website](#).

If patients require any further advice they should contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Team on 0118 982 2720 or email: bwccg.bwpalscomplaints@nhs.net

Other useful links:

- Visit the NHS website for free health advice and information about supporting a healthy lifestyle: www.nhs.uk
- Details of your local pharmacy and their opening times are available here: www.nhs.uk/chemist

Best Regards,

On behalf of the Medicines Optimisation Team

Berkshire West CCG, 57-59 Bath Road, Reading, RG30 2BA

Your GP, nurse or pharmacist will not generally give you a prescription for certain medicines that are available to buy in a pharmacy or supermarket, even if you qualify for free prescriptions.

This applies to treatments for these conditions:

GPs, nurses or pharmacists will also generally no longer prescribe probiotics and some vitamins and minerals. You can get these from eating a healthy, varied and balanced diet, or buy them at your pharmacy or supermarket.

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

You may still be prescribed a medicine for a condition on the list if:

- You need treatment for a long-term condition, e.g. regular pain relief for chronic arthritis or inflammatory bowel disease.
- You need treatment for more complex forms of minor illnesses, e.g. migraines that are very bad and where over the counter medicines do not work.
- You need an over the counter medicine to treat a side effect of a prescription medicine or symptom of another illness, e.g. constipation when taking certain painkillers.
- The medicine has a licence which doesn't allow the product to be sold over the counter to certain groups of patients. This could include babies, children or women who are pregnant or breast-feeding.
- The person prescribing thinks that a patient cannot treat themselves, for example because of mental health problems or severe social vulnerability.

Why does the NHS need to reduce prescriptions for over the counter medicines?

The NHS has been spending around £136 million a year on prescriptions for medicines that can be bought from a pharmacy or supermarket, such as paracetamol. By reducing the amount the NHS spends on over the counter medicines; we can give priority to treatments for people with more serious conditions, such as cancer, diabetes and mental health problems.