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## **Introduction**

### **Policy statement**

Within primary care, self-care is largely acknowledged as being a pivotal solution to reducing the demand placed on practices. Promoting this notion through awareness campaigns will ensure that the patient population are aware of the options available to them, rather than routinely considering the use of GPs, out of hours services, emergency departments and walk-in centres for self-limiting conditions. Self-care can improve a person's quality of life and disease outcomes.

The Practice does not support the prescribing of medicines and/or treatment for minor conditions when it is considered that:

- Self-care is the most appropriate solution
- Medicine/treatment is available over the counter

### **Status**

The practice aims to design and implement policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Consideration has been given to the impact this policy might have in regard to the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time. For the avoidance of doubt, it does not form part of your contract of employment.

### **Training and support**

The practice will provide guidance and support to help those to whom it applies to understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy. Additional support will be provided to managers and supervisors to enable them to deal more effectively with matters arising from this policy.

### **Scope**

#### **Who it applies to**

This document applies to all employees of the practice. Other individuals performing functions in relation to the practice, such as agency workers, locums and contractors, are encouraged to use it.

#### **Why and how it applies to them**

This policy outlines the principles of self-care which all staff at The Practice must have a baseline level of knowledge about to enable them to advise the patient population accordingly.



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## Definition of terms

### Self-care

Self-care encompasses the things individuals can do to protect their health and manage illness.<sup>1</sup>

### British Medical Association

The British Medical Association (BMA) is the trade union and professional body for doctors in the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

## Guidance

### Rationale

A large proportion of minor illnesses can be managed by the patient, negating the need for intervention at practice level. It is therefore not feasible to routinely prescribe products which treat such conditions. See the end of this document for a list of conditions deemed appropriate for self-care.

### Exclusions

This policy does not cover the treatment of long-term conditions or treatment for those conditions that have not responded to over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. Clinicians are to continue to prescribe medicines for the treatment of complex conditions.

Furthermore, those patients whose ability to undertake self-care is compromised due to medical or mental health reasons may be prescribed items if their health could be adversely affected.

### Signposting

Patients presenting at The Practice with minor, self-limiting conditions which are deemed appropriate for self-care will be signposted appropriately – i.e. to the local pharmacy to purchase over-the-counter medicines.

### Information for patients

The practice team is to encourage patients to accept responsibility for their own health and well-being. Furthermore, patients are to be directed to view leaflets or online information which is available for a range of conditions, using platforms such as NHS Choices or the practice website. A poster is displayed in the waiting room to further educate patients in this matter.

### Supporting people in care homes

People who receive social care should be supported to access OTC products to enable them to self-care with the appropriate safeguards put in place.

Access to OTC medicines to self-care is an issue of equality and care home staff should have policies in place to support people who wish to access OTC products in a timely manner.

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<sup>1</sup> [BMA Self-care: question & answer](#)

<sup>2</sup> [BMA](#)



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Guidance for Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) on conditions for which OTC medicines should not routinely be prescribed in primary care was published in March 2018. This new guidance has the potential to impact on individuals receiving social care. Therefore, NHS England has advised that there are exceptions to the guidance such as:

### **Patients being treated for long-term conditions**

Circumstances where the product licence does not allow the medicine to be bought over the counter (e.g. pregnant women)

“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”

Care home staff will therefore need to liaise closely with The Practice clinical staff to identify people who are affected and make appropriate arrangements.

A clinician at The Practice may recommend the person, relatives or care staff to purchase a specific product to treat a minor ailment for a particular person, such as olive oil for treatment of ear wax. Verbal or written instructions must be recorded in the individual care plan.

Healthcare professionals can use their clinical judgement with regards to products that are available OTC but are prescribed for the treatment or prevention of long-term or serious conditions. These should be monitored and reviewed at appropriate intervals.

### **Clinical discretion**

There may be occasions when the clinician considers that the presenting condition is a condition that is not routinely thought to be self-limiting. In such circumstances, the clinician may opt to prescribe the appropriate medicine. This decision is to be based solely on the presenting clinical factors and not the socio-economic status of the patient.

### **Prescription payment exemption**

Being exempt from paying prescription charges does not merit an exception to the guidance detailed in this policy.

### **Summary**

There are a plethora of self-limiting conditions that can be treated effectively by patients using over-the-counter medicines. Patients are to be encouraged to use the self-care route for minor illnesses and conditions as The Practice will not routinely prescribe medicines for those conditions listed under Self-limiting Conditions.



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## Self-limiting conditions

The following are conditions for which treatment will not be provided on prescription. This list may be updated in accordance to government guidelines or patient need.

|                        |  |  |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Athlete's foot         | Head lice  | Sore throat  |
| Cold sores             | Heartburn  | Sunburn  |
| Colic                  | Indigestion  | Sun protection   |
| Conjunctivitis         | Infrequent migraine  | Teething   |
| Constipation           | Insect bites and stings  | Toothache  |
| Coughs and colds       | Mild acne  | Threadworm   |
| Cradle cap             | Mild cystitis  | Travel medicines   |
| Dandruff               | Mild dry skin  | Vaginal thrush   |
| Diarrhoea (adults)     | Mild irritant dermatitis   | Vitamins and other health supplements not clinically indicated |
| Dry eyes               | Minor burns and scalds   |  |
| Ear wax                | Minor conditions associated with discomfort (aches, sprains, period pain, back pain) | Warts and verrucae   |
| Fungal nail infections |  |  |
| Fungal skin infections | Mouth ulcers   |  |
| Haemorrhoids           | Nasal congestion   |  |
| Hay fever              | Oral thrush  |  |
| Headaches              | Skin rashes including nappy rash   |  |



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## Self-care poster

# Prescribing of medicines to treat minor illnesses is changing



How is it changing?

Medicines which are available to buy will no longer be routinely prescribed for the following conditions:

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

Why is it changing?

These common conditions can be treated at home with items that can be bought from pharmacies, supermarkets and other stores.

As you will not need an appointment at your GP surgery to obtain a prescription this will save you time. It will also free up appointments for patients with more serious conditions.

If your condition needs the further attention your pharmacist will recognise this and recommend you make an appointment.

**BE SELF-CARE AWARE**