

Self care and over the counter items: A quick reference guide

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Background

In March 2018, NHS England published guidance for conditions for which over the counter (OTC) 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.¹

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

Some brands have been included in this document as they are widely recognised and this will assist prescribers when advising patients of OTC treatments. It should be noted that there may be generic products of the branded medicines available and this information should be relayed to the patient. Other brands have been included as they have specific product licences and OTC restrictions, which may aid prescribers when making clinical decisions with their patients.

Potential exceptions to the guidance

There are certain scenarios where patients may continue to have their treatments prescribed at the GPs/prescribers discretion 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 OTC 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 does not allow the product to be sold OTC to certain groups of patients. This may vary by medicine, but could include babies, children and/or women who are pregnant for example 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.

Probiotics

There is currently insufficient clinical evidence to support prescribing of probiotics within the NHS for the treatment or prevention of diarrhoea of any cause.

Both the Public Health England C.difficile guidance² and NICE CG 84³ recommend that probiotics cannot be recommended currently and that “Good quality randomised controlled trials should be conducted in the UK to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of a specific probiotic using clearly defined treatment regimens and outcome measures before they are routinely prescribed”.

Exceptions

- No exceptions.

Vitamins and minerals

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.

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 Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (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.

Any prescribing not in-line with listed exceptions should be discontinued.

This guidance does not apply to Healthy Start Vitamins but these are not currently prescribed on an NHS prescription but are commissioned separately.

Exceptions

- Clinicians may consider prescribing for a 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 and maintenance or preventative treatment is not an exception.
- Calcium and vitamin D for osteoporosis.
- Malnutrition including alcoholism.
- Patients suitable to receive Healthy start vitamins for example pregnancy or children between the ages of six months to their fourth birthday. (This is not on prescription but commissioned separately).

Condition	Acute sore throat
	There is little evidence to suggest that treatments such as lozenges or throat sprays help to treat the cause of sore throat.
Advice to patients	Patients should be advised to take simple painkillers and implement some self care measures such as gargling with warm salty water instead.
Exceptions	Red flag symptoms
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen tablets/capsules and suspension (General Sales List GSLx16, Pharmacy only Px32 pack size) • Paracetamol tablets/capsules and suspension (General Sales List GSLx16, Pharmacy only Px32 pack size)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen - long term conditions requiring regular pain relief, asthma, unstable high blood pressure, taking anticoagulants, stomach ulcer, perforation or bleeding (active or history of), renal, hepatic or cardiac impairment, pregnancy , breastfeeding, children under 12 years • Paracetamol - long term conditions requiring regular pain relief, children under 2 months, babies born before 37 weeks and babies weighing less than 4kg

Condition	Infrequent cold sores of the lip
	Cold sores caused by the herpes simplex virus usually clear up without treatment within seven to ten days.
Advice to patients	<p>Antiviral creams are available OTC from pharmacies without a prescription. If used correctly, they can help ease symptoms and speed up the healing time.</p> <p>To be effective, apply as soon as the first signs of a cold sore appear.</p> <p>Using an antiviral cream after this initial period is unlikely to have much of an effect.</p>
Exceptions	<p>Immunocompromised patients</p> <p>Red flag symptoms</p>
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aciclovir cream 5% (General Sales List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immunocompromised and terminally ill • Only for face and lips

Condition	Conjunctivitis
	<p>Treatment is not usually needed for conjunctivitis as the symptoms usually clear within a week. There are several self care measures that may help with symptoms. If treatment is needed, then treatment is dependent on the cause:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In severe bacterial cases, antibiotic eye drops and eye ointments can be used to clear the infection. • Irritant conjunctivitis will clear up as soon as whatever is causing it is removed. • Allergic conjunctivitis can usually be treated with antiallergy medications such as antihistamines. The substance that caused the allergy should be avoided.
Advice to patients	Treatments for conjunctivitis can be purchased over the counter however almost half of all simple cases of conjunctivitis clear up within ten days without any treatment.
Exceptions	Red flag symptoms
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chloramphenicol 0.5% eye drops (Pharmacy only P) • Chloramphenicol 1% eye ointment (Pharmacy only P)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children under 2 years • Pregnancy • Breastfeeding

Condition	Coughs and colds and nasal congestion
	Most colds start to improve in seven to ten days. Most coughs clear up within two to three weeks. Both conditions can cause nasal congestion. Neither condition requires any treatment. However, some over the counter medicines help to relieve short term fevers and nasal congestion.
Advice to patients	These conditions do not require any treatment. However, some over the counter medicines help to relieve short term fevers and nasal congestion.
Exceptions	Red flag symptoms
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<p><u>Pain/discomfort/distress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paracetamol tablets/capsules and suspension (General Sales List GSLx16, Pharmacy only Px32 pack size) • Ibuprofen tablets/capsules and suspension (General Sales List GSLx16, Pharmacy only Px32 pack size). Note. Ibuprofen and other NSAIDs may exacerbate nasal congestion <p><u>Nasal Congestion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aromatic inhalations, for example Olbas® oil and Vicks® vapour rub (General Sales List GSL) • Pseudoephedrine containing preparations, for example Sudafed®, Benadryl® Allergy Relief Plus Decongestant Capsules and Galpseud® (Pharmacy only P) • Sodium chloride 0.9% nasal drops and spray, for example Snufflebabe® nasal drops, Calpol® Soothe & Care drops and spray and Mandanol® nasal drops (General Sales List GSL)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen - long term conditions requiring regular pain relief, asthma, unstable high blood pressure, taking anticoagulants, stomach ulcer, perforation or bleeding (active or history of), renal, hepatic or cardiac impairment, pregnancy, breastfeeding, children under 3 months and not for use in chicken pox • Paracetamol - long term conditions requiring regular pain relief, severe renal or severe hepatic impairment, children under 2 months, babies born before 37 weeks and babies weighing less than 4kg • Pseudoephedrine - children under 12 years, pregnancy, breastfeeding, severe hypertension, severe coronary artery disease, severe renal impairment, pheochromocytoma, diabetes, hyperthyroidism and closed angle glaucoma

Condition	Cradlecap (seborrhoeic dermatitis – infants)
	Cradle cap is harmless and does not usually itch or cause discomfort. It usually appears in babies in the first two months of their lives, and clears up without treatment within weeks to a few months.
Advice to patients	Cradle cap treatment should not routinely be offered in primary care as the condition is self-limiting and will clear up on its own without the need for treatment.
Exceptions	If causing distress to the infant and not improving
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<p>Olive oil, baby oil, emulsifying ointments and shampoos (General Sales List GSL). Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capasal® therapeutic Shampoo • Dentinox® Cradle Cap Treatment Shampoo • Infaderm® Shampoo • Johnson's® Baby Oil • Metanium® Cradle Cap Cream • Pickles Snufflebabe® Cradle Cap Cream • Savlon® Babycare Shampoo
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it has spread to the face • Do not use on broken skin or infected skin

Condition	Haemorrhoids
	<p>In many cases, haemorrhoids do not cause symptoms and some people do not even realise they have them. Haemorrhoids often clear up by themselves after a few days.</p> <p>Making simple dietary changes and not straining on the toilet are often recommended first.</p>
Advice to patients	Treatments (creams, ointments and suppositories) can reduce itching and discomfort and these are available over the counter for purchase.
Exceptions	Red flag symptoms
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<p>Zinc oxide products (General Sales List GSL). Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anusol® creams/ointments • Germoloids® creams/ointments • Haemorrhoid relief
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children under 18years • Pregnancy • Breastfeeding • Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool

Condition	Infant colic
	As colic eventually improves on its own, medical treatment is not usually recommended.
Advice to patients	<p>There are some over the counter treatments available that could be tried. However, there is limited evidence for the effectiveness of these treatments.</p> <p>The most useful intervention is support for parents and reassurance that colic will resolve.</p>
Exceptions	Red flag symptoms
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simeticone 40mg/ml, for example Infacol® (General Sales List GSL) • Dimeticone 42mg/5ml, for example Dentinox® (General Sales List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dimeticone 42mg/5ml - should be avoided in fructose, glucose-galactose or sucrose intolerant patients as it contains sucrose

Condition	<p>Mild cystitis</p> <p>Mild cystitis is a common type of urinary tract inflammation, normally caused by an infection; however it is usually more of a nuisance than a cause for serious concern. Mild cases can be defined as those that are responsive to symptomatic treatment but will also clear up on their own. If symptoms do not improve in three days, despite self care measures, then the patient should be advised to see their GP.</p>
Advice to patients	<p>Symptomatic treatment using products that reduce the acidity of the urine to reduce symptoms are available, but there is a lack of evidence to suggest they are effective.</p>
Exceptions	<p>Red flag symptoms</p>
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sodium citrate 4g sachets products, for example Cystoclam® and Cymalon® (General Sales List GSL) • Potassium citrate 1.5g liquid, 3g sachets or 1.5g effervescent tabs products for example Cymaclear®, Cystopurin® and Effercitrate® (General Sale List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sodium citrate 4g sachet products – men, children under 16 years, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, renal disease , pregnancy and breastfeeding • Potassium citrate products - children under 6 years, history of renal disease, pregnancy and breastfeeding

Condition	Mild irritant dermatitis
	Irritant dermatitis is a type of eczema triggered by contact with a particular substance. Once treated most people can expect their symptoms to improve and/or clear up completely if the irritant or allergen can be identified and removed or avoided. It is most commonly caused by irritants such as soaps, washing powders, detergents, solvents or regular contact with water.
Advice to patients	Treatment normally involves avoiding the allergen or irritant and treating symptoms with over the counter emollients and topical corticosteroids.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emollients, for example Exocream®, Dermacool® Cream • Crotamiton, for example Eurax® • Steroid creams, for example hydrocortisone (Pharmacy only P). Brands include Eurax-Hc® Cream, and Hc45 Hydrocortisone® Cream
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children under 12 for some brands. However, the following may be used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Eurax® licenced for children over 3 years » Hydrocortisone Cream licenced for children over 10 years • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Broken or inflamed skin • Use on the eyes, face or ano-genital region

Condition	Dandruff
	Dandruff is a common skin condition. It can be defined as mild scaling of the scalp without itching. Dandruff is not contagious or harmful.
Advice to patients	Dandruff can be easily treated with over the counter antifungal shampoos.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ketoconazole, for example Nizoral® anti-dandruff Shampoo (General Sales List GSL) • Coal tar shampoo, for example Polytar® Scalp Shampoo (General Sales List GSL) • Selenium sulfide shampoo, for example Selsun® Shampoo (Pharmacy only P)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All products - pregnancy, breastfeeding • Ketoconazole - children under 12 years • Coal tar - children under 12 years, infected open skin lesions and sore or acute pustular psoriasis • Selenium sulfide - children under 5 years

Condition	Diarrhoea (adults only)
	<p>Diarrhoea normally affects most people from time to time and is usually nothing to worry about. However, it can take a few days to a week to clear up.</p> <p>Acute diarrhoea is usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection and other causes include drugs, anxiety or a food allergy.</p>
Advice to patients	<p>Over the counter treatments can help replace lost fluids or reduce bowel motions.</p> <p>Loperamide is not usually recommended unless the patient is travelling or it is considered to be appropriate by the clinician. Taking loperamide may prolong the illness.</p>
Exceptions	<p>Please note: this recommendation does not apply to children.</p> <p>No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.</p>
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral rehydration sachets (General Sales List GSL) • Loperamide 2mg capsule (General Sales List GSL 6 Capsules, larger pack sizes Pharmacy only P)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral rehydration sachets - patients with liver or renal disease, patients on low potassium/sodium diets and patients with diabetes • Loperamide – inflammatory bowel disease, post bowel surgery, post pelvic radiation, colorectal cancer and patients under 12 years old.

Condition	Dry eyes/sore tired eyes
	Dry eye syndrome, or dry eye disease, is a common condition that occurs when the eyes do not make enough tears, or the tears evaporate too quickly. Most cases of sore tired eyes resolve themselves.
Advice to patients	<p>Patients should be encouraged to manage both dry eyes and sore eyes by implementing some self care measures such as good eyelid hygiene and avoidance of environmental factors alongside treatment.</p> <p>Mild to moderate cases of dry eye syndrome or sore tired eyes can usually be treated using lubricant eye treatments that consist of a range of drops, gels and ointments that can be easily be purchased over the counter.</p>
Exceptions	Pre-existing long term conditions affecting the eyes.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<p>Lubricant eye treatments include hypromellose 0.3% (Pharmacy only P) and carbomer (Pharmacy only P) Brands include (generic products are available):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GelTears® • Optrex® Sore EyesDrops • Simple® Eye Ointment • Tears Naturale® EyeDrops • Viscotears® Eye Ge
OTC restrictions⁴	Pregnancy and breastfeeding

Condition	Earwax
	Earwax is produced inside ears to keep them clean and free of germs. It usually passes out of the ears harmlessly, but sometimes too much can build up and block the ears.
Advice to patients	A build-up of earwax is a common problem that can often be treated using eardrops bought over the counter. These can help soften the earwax so that it falls out naturally.
Exceptions	Perforated ear drum
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Olive oil drops (General Sales List GSL)• Arachis oil/chlorobutanol hemihydrate drops, for example Cerumol® (Pharmacy only P)• Docusate sodium 0.5% drops, for example Waxsol® (Pharmacy only P)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No restrictions

Condition	Excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis)
	Hyperhidrosis is a common condition in which a person sweats excessively. First line treatment involves simple lifestyle changes.
Advice to patients	<p>An antiperspirant containing aluminium chloride is usually the first line of treatment and is sold in most pharmacies. Things you can do to help with excessive sweating are:</p> <p>Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear loose-fitting clothes to minimise signs of sweating or clothes made of wicking fabrics • Wear socks that absorb moisture and change your socks at least twice a day if possible • Wear leather shoes and try to wear different shoes day to day <p>Don't</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear tight clothes or man-made fabrics – for example, nylon • Wear enclosed boots or sports shoes that may cause your feet to sweat more • Do things that might make your sweating worse – for example, drinking alcohol or eating spicy food
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	Aluminium chloride, for example Driclor® and Anhydrol Forte®
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No restrictions

Condition	<h2>Headlice</h2> <p>Headlice are a common problem, particularly in school children aged 4-11. They are largely harmless, but can live in the hair for a long time if not treated and can be irritating and frustrating to deal with.</p>
Advice to patients	<p>It is not always possible to prevent head lice infestation, as they are spread by close head to head contact, especially when children are playing. However, these self care tips will help with detection and prevention.</p> <p>Frequent checking - carefully looking at your child's scalp and hair for head lice, especially at the start of the school year. Ideally do this weekly.</p> <p>'Wet combing'- Wash hair as usual then use conditioner, do not wash this off. Use a normal comb to untangle hair, then a fine-toothed head lice detection comb to remove live head lice.</p> <p>Avoid sharing - Hats, combs, hairbrushes, towels, pillows.</p> <p>Hair length - People with longer hair are more likely to catch head lice, simply because it is easier for the head lice to transfer to and from longer hair.</p> <p>Head lice eradication products containing alcohol: there is a risk of serious burns if treated hair is exposed to open flames or other sources of ignition, e.g. cigarettes.</p>
Exceptions	<p>Current skin conditions of the scalp</p> <p>Side effects of a severe infestation</p>
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headlice comb – for wet combing hair after treatment with conditioner, lotions, solutions or sprays • Dimeticone gel, lotion or spray 4%, for example Hedrin®, Lyclear® and Nitrid® (General Sales List GSL for 100ml or other pack sizes Pharmacy only P) • Malathion aqueous lotion 0.5%, for example Derbac- M® (General Sales List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children under 6months

Condition	Infrequent Indigestion and heartburn
	Most people have indigestion at some point. Usually, it is not a sign of anything more serious and can be treated at home without the need for medical advice, as it is often mild and infrequent and specialist treatment is not required.
Advice to patients	<p>Most people are able to manage their indigestion by making simple diet and lifestyle changes, or taking medication such as antacids.</p> <p>Most people can ease symptoms by simple changes to diet and lifestyle and avoiding foods that make indigestion worse (e.g. rich spicy or fatty foods, caffeinated drinks).</p>
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sodium alginate, calcium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate, for example Gaviscon® (General Sales List GSL) and Gaviscon Infant® (Pharmacy only P) • Esomeprazole 20mg tablets, for example Nexium Control® (General Sales List GSL) • Pantoprazole 20mg tablets, for example Pantoloc Control® (Pharmacy only P) • Ranitidine 75mg tablets, for example Zantac®, Gavilast®, Ranicalm® (General Sales List GSL for pack size of 12)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All products - Pregnancy, breastfeeding, jaundice or liver disease • Gaviscon® - Children under 12 years, renal failure, hypercalcaemia, nephrocalcinosis, kidney stones • Gaviscon® Infant - Children under 12 months, babies born before 37 weeks, children over 2 years and renal impairment • Esomeprazole and pantoprazole - children under 18 years or adults over 55 years with new or recently changed symptoms • Ranitidine - children under 12 years, peptic ulceration or elderly taking NSAIDS

Condition	Infrequent constipation
	Constipation can affect people of all ages and can be just for a short period of time.
Advice to patients	It can be effectively managed with a change in diet or lifestyle and short term use of over the counter laxatives.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<p>Consider appropriate laxative for the patient:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • .Bisacodyl – Stimulant laxative (General Sales List GSL and Pharmacy only P depending on pack size) • Senna –Stimulant laxative (General Sales List GSL) • Lactulose - Osmotic laxative (Pharmacy only P) • Ispaghula Husk Granules – Bulk-forming laxative (General Sales List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lactulose - galactosaemia, gastro-intestinal obstruction, digestive perforation or risk of digestive perforation • Bisacodyl - acute inflammatory bowel diseases, severe dehydration, pregnancy and breastfeeding and children under 10 years • Senna - severe dehydration, children under 18 years, pregnancy and breastfeeding • Ispaghula Husk Granules - children under 6 years and diabetes

Condition	Infrequent migraine
	Migraine is a common health condition, affecting around one in every five women and around one in every 15 men.
Advice to patients	Mild infrequent migraines can be adequately treated with over the counter painkillers and a number of combination medicines for migraine are available that contain both painkillers and anti-sickness medicines.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen tablets, capsules and suspension (General Sales List GSLx16, Pharmacy only Px32) • Paracetamol tablets, capsules and suspension (General Sales List GSLx16, Pharmacy only Px32) • Anti-sickness - prochlorperazine maleate, for example Buccastem M® Tab 3mg (Pharmacy only P)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen - long term conditions requiring regular pain relief, asthma, unstable high blood pressure, taking anticoagulants, stomach ulcer, perforation or bleeding (active or history of), renal, hepatic or cardiac impairment, pregnancy, breastfeeding, children under 12 years • Paracetamol - long term conditions requiring regular pain relief, children under 2 months, babies born before 37 weeks and babies weighing less than 4kg • Prochlorperazine maleate - impaired liver function, existing blood dyscrasias, epilepsy, parkinson's disease, prostatic hypertrophy, narrow angle glaucoma, pregnancy and breastfeeding

Condition	Insect bites and stings
	Most insect bites and stings are not serious and will get better within a few hours or days.
Advice to patients	Over-the-counter treatments can help ease symptoms, such as painkillers, creams for itching and antihistamines.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calamine lotion • Mepyramine maleate 2%, for example Anthisan® Bite and Sting Cream 2%® • Savlon® Bites and Stings Pain Relief Gel • Antiseptic Cream (General Sales List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children under 6 months

Condition	Mild acne
	Acne is a common skin condition that affects most people at some point. Although acne cannot be cured, it can be controlled with treatment.
Advice to patients	Several creams, lotions and gels for treating acne are available at pharmacies. Treatments can take up to three months to work.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benzoyl peroxide-containing preparations (Pharmacy only P), for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » PanOxyl Aquagel® » Acnecide® » Duac once daily® » Quinoderm® » Brevoxyl®
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Damaged skin • Elderly • Children under 12 years

Condition	Mild dry skin
	Patients with mild dry skin can be successfully managed using over the counter products on a long term basis.
Advice to patients	Emollients are often used to help manage dry, itchy or scaly skin conditions.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<p>Emollient brands include (General Sales List GSL):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aveeno® • Balneum® • Cetraben® • Dermol® • E45® • Oilatum® • Zerobase®
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broken or infected skin • Aveeno® Cream and lotion for over 3 month olds • E45 for children over 1 month old • Cetraban® Cream and lotion over 1 year olds

Condition	Sunburn due to excessive sun exposure
	Most people manage sun burn symptoms themselves or prevent symptoms developing by using sun protection. These products can easily be bought in a pharmacy or supermarket.
Advice to patients	Cool your skin by having a cold bath or shower, sponging it with cold water or holding a flannel to it. Use lotions containing aloe vera to soothe and moisturise the skin and drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration. Take painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen to relieve the pain if required.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calamine lotion (General Sales List GSL)• After sun preparations (General Sales List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No restrictions

Condition	Sun protection
	Most people prevent symptoms of sun damage developing using sun protection. These products can easily be bought in a pharmacy or supermarket.
Advice to patients	Sun protection products can readily be bought in a pharmacy or supermarket.
Exceptions	ACBS approved indication of photodermatoses, i.e. where skin protection should be prescribed.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun protection lotion, gels and creams (General Sales List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No restrictions

Condition	Mild to moderate hay fever/allergic rhinitis
	Hay fever is a common allergic condition that affects up to one in five people.
Advice to patients	Most people with mild to moderate symptoms are able to relieve symptoms with OTC treatments recommended by a pharmacist.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cetirizine tablets or 5mg/5ml solution (General Sales List GSL/ Pharmacy only P)* • Loratadine 10mg tablets or 1mg/1ml syrup (General Sales List GSL/Pharmacy only P)* • Chlorphenamine 4mg tablets or 2mg/5ml solution (Pharmacy only P) • Acrivastine 8mg capsules (General Sales List GSL/Pharmacy only P)* • Beclometasone 0.05% nasal spray (General Sales List GSL/Pharmacy only P)* • Sodium cromoglicate 2% eye drops (General Sales List GSL)
OTC Restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cetirizine - Tablets not for children under 6 years, 1mg/ml solution not for children under 2 years, epilepsy, renal impairment, rare hereditary problems of fructose intolerance , pregnancy and breastfeeding. • Loratadine - Tablets not for children under 6 years, 1mg/ml syrup not for children under 2 years. Rare hereditary problems of galactose intolerance, the Lapp lactase deficiency or glucose-galactose malabsorption, liver impairment, pregnancy and breastfeeding. • Chlorphenamine - Tablets not for children under 6 years, 2mg/5ml solution not for children under 1 year. Taken monoamine oxidase inhibitors within the last 14 days, epilepsy, raised intra-ocular pressure including glaucoma, prostatic hypertrophy, severe hypertension or cardiovascular disease, bronchitis, bronchiectasis or asthma, hepatic impairment, renal impairment, rare hereditary problems of galactose intolerance, Lapp lactase deficiency or glucose- galactose malabsorption, pregnancy and breastfeeding. • Acrivastine - Not for children under 12 years and adults over 65 years, renal impairment, rare hereditary problems of galactose intolerance, the Lapp lactase deficiency or glucose-galactose malabsorption, pregnancy and breastfeeding. • Beclomethasone 0.05% nasal spray -children under 18 years, pregnancy and breastfeeding • Sodium cromoglicate 2% eye drops - children under 6 years, pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Condition	Minor burns and scalds
	Burns and scalds are damage to the skin caused by heat. Both are treated in the same way. Depending on how serious a burn is, it is possible to treat burns at home.
Advice to patients	Antiseptic creams and treatments for burns should be kept in a medicine cabinet at home.
Exceptions	<p>Serious burns always require professional medical attention. Burns requiring hospital A and E treatment include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<p>Creams/gels/sprays (General Sales List GSL) for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Betadine® powder • Germolene® antiseptic cream or gel • Savlon® antiseptic cream • Savlon® First Aid Wash • Sudocrem® First Aid Cream
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Betadine® powder - Pregnancy, breastfeeding, children under 2 years and taking lithium therapy

Condition	Minor conditions associated with pain
	In most cases, headaches, period pain, mild fever and back pain can be treated at home with OTC painkillers and lifestyle changes, such as getting more rest and drinking enough fluids.
Advice to patients	Patients should be encouraged to keep a small supply of OTC analgesics in their medicines cabinets at home so they are able to manage minor ailments at home without the need for a GP appointment.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen tablets, capsules and suspension (General Sales List GSL x16 and Pharmacy only Px32) • Paracetamol tablets, capsules and suspension (General Sales List GSL x16 and Pharmacy only Px32) • Co-codamol 8/500mg tablets (Pharmacy only P)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen - long term conditions requiring regular pain relief, asthma, unstable high blood pressure, severe renal or severe hepatic impairment, taking anticoagulants, stomach ulcers/problems, children under 3 months, pregnancy, breastfeeding and not for use in chicken pox • Paracetamol - long term conditions requiring regular pain relief, severe renal or severe hepatic impairment, children under 2 months, babies born before 37 weeks and babies weighing less than 4kg • Co-codamol - children under 12 yrs, severe liver disease, breastfeeding and pregnancy

Condition	Mouth ulcers
	Mouth ulcers are usually harmless and do not need to be treated because most clear up by themselves within a week or two. Mouth ulcers are common and can usually be managed at home, without seeing a dentist or GP.
Advice to patients	OTC treatment can help to reduce swelling and ease any discomfort.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lidocaine hydrochloride/chlorocresol cetylpyridinium chloride, for example Bonjela® (General Sales List GSL) • Choline salicylate/cetalkonium chloride, for example Anbesol® (General Sales List GSL) • Benzocaine, for example Orajel® (General Sales List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children under 16 years • Active peptic ulceration • Pregnancy • Breastfeeding

Condition	Nappy rash
	Up to a third of babies and toddlers in nappies have nappy rash at any one time.
Advice to patients	Nappy rash can usually be treated at home using a barrier cream. Nappy rash usually clears up after about three days if recommended hygiene tips are followed.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Titanium dioxide, titanium peroxide, titanium salicylate, for example Metanium® (General Sales List GSL) • Zinc oxide, benzyl alcohol, benzyl benzoate, lanolin, for example Sudocrem® (General Sales List GSL) • Petroleum jelly (General Sales List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No restrictions

Condition	Oral thrush
	<p>Oral thrush is a minor condition that can be treated without the need for a GP consultation or prescription in the first instance.</p> <p>It is common in babies and older people with dentures or those using steroid inhalers.</p>
Advice to patients	It can easily be treated with over the counter gel.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miconazole 2% oral gel (15g) , for example Daktarin® oral gel (Pharmacy only P)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children under 4 months • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Patients taking warfarin • Liver dysfunction

Condition	Prevention of dental caries (dental decay)
	The dentist may advise on using higher-strength fluoride toothpaste if a patient is particularly at risk of tooth decay.
Advice to patients	Higher fluoride toothpastes and mouthwashes can be purchased over the counter. Prescription only preparations can be prescribed by a dentist.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mouthwashes chlorhexidine digluconate, for example Corsodyl® (General Sales List GSL)• Fluoride toothpastes (General Sales List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chlorhexidine digluconate mouthwashes – children under 12 years

Condition	Ringworm/athletes foot
	<p>Ringworm is a common fungal infection that can cause a red or silvery ring-like rash on the skin. Despite its name, ringworm doesn't have anything to do with worms.</p> <p>Athlete's foot is a rash caused by a fungus that usually appears between the toes.</p>
Advice to patients	<p>These fungal infections, medically known as "tinea", are not serious and are usually easily treated with over the counter treatments. However, they are contagious and easily spread so it is important to practice good foot hygiene.</p>
Exceptions	<p>Lymphoedema or history of lower limb cellulitis.</p>
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miconazole 2% cream 0.16% powder, for example Daktarin® and Daktarin Aktiv® • Terbinafine hydrochloride 1%, for example Lamisil® AT cream, gel, spray and Scholl® advanced cream, powder, spray
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All products –diabetic, pregnancy, breastfeeding • Terbinafine hydrochloride – see individual products for licencing information, use usually not recommended in children

Condition	Teething/mild toothache
	<p>Teething can be distressing for some babies, but there are ways to make it easier for them.</p> <p>Toothache can come and go, or be constant. Eating or drinking can make the pain worse, particularly if the food or drink is hot or cold.</p>
Advice to patients	<p>Teething gels often contain a mild local anaesthetic, which helps to numb any pain or discomfort caused by teething and these can be purchased from a pharmacy. If the baby is in pain or has a mild raised temperature (less than 38°C) then paracetamol or ibuprofen suspension can be given. Mild toothache in adults can also be treated with over the counter painkillers.</p>
Exceptions	<p>No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.</p>
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen tablets and suspension (General Sales List GSL x16) and suspension (Pharmacy only P x32) • Paracetamol tablets and suspension (General Sales List GSL)16) and suspension (Pharmacy only P x32) • Teething gel, for example Bonjela® teething gel, Dentinox® teething gel (General Sales List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen - long term conditions requiring regular pain relief, asthma, unstable high blood pressure, taking anticoagulants, stomach ulcer, perforation or bleeding (active or history of), renal, hepatic or cardiac impairment, pregnancy , breastfeeding, children under 3 months and not for use in chicken pox • Paracetamol - long term conditions requiring regular pain relief, severe renal or severe hepatic impairment children under 2 months, babies born before 37 weeks and babies weighing less than 4kg • Bonjela® - babies under 2 months, heart disease and liver disease

Condition	Threadworms
	Threadworms (pinworms) are tiny worms that pass in the stools. They are common in children and can be spread easily. They can be effectively treated without the need to visit the GP.
Advice to patients	<p>Treatment for threadworms can easily be bought from pharmacies. This is usually a chewable tablet or liquid formulation. Strict hygiene measures can also help clear up a threadworm infection and reduce the likelihood of reinfection.</p> <p>Everyone in the household will require treatment, even if they do not have symptoms.</p>
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mebendazole 100mg tablets, for example Ovex® (Pharmacy only P) - available as a family pack or individual pack
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children under 2years • Pregnancy • Breastfeeding

Condition	Travel sickness
	Mild motion sickness can be treated by various self care measures (e.g. staring at a fixed object, getting some fresh air, listening to music etc).
Advice to patients	Severe motion sickness can be treated with over the counter medicines.
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cinnarizine tablets 15mg, for example Stugeron® • Hyoscine hydrobromide Tab 150mcg, for example Joyrides® and Kwells®
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cinnarizine tablets 15mg - Parkinsons, people with fructose or galactose intolerance, Lapp lactase deficiency, glucose-galactose malabsorption or sucrase-isomaltase insufficiency, should not take this medicine because it contains lactose and sucrose • Porphyria, children under 5 years, pregnancy, breastfeeding • Hyoscine hydrobromide tablets 150mcg - children under 3 years (Joyrides®) under 4 years (Kwells®), epilepsy, glaucoma, pregnancy, breastfeeding, paralytic ileus, pyloric stenosis/prostatic enlargement, myasthenia gravis

Condition	Warts and verrucae
	Most people will have warts at some point in their life.
Advice to patients	<p>They are generally harmless and tend to go away on their own eventually.</p> <p>Several treatments can be purchased from a pharmacy to get rid of warts and verrucae more quickly if patients require treatment.</p>
Exceptions	No routine exceptions have been identified. See earlier for general exceptions.
Examples of medicines available to purchase OTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verruca gel - Salicyclic acid, lactic acid, for example Bazuka® Extra Strength Gel, Bazuka® Gel (Pharmacy only P) and Bazuka® Treatment Gel (General Sales List GSL) • Wart paint/ointment - Salicyclic acid, lactic acid, for example Salactol® , Occlusal®, Salatac®, Verrugon® ointment (Pharmacy only P) • Wart freeze treatments, for example Scholl® Freeze and Bazuka® Sub Zero (General Sales List GSL)
OTC restrictions⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diabetic patients • Face, neck, ano-genital area • Moles, birthmarks, hairy warts or skin lesions • Broken skin • Impaired peripheral blood circulation • Scholl® Freeze and Bazuka® Sub zero – As above also including children under 4 years

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