



Longton Health Centre

Prescribing of 'self-care' products: Q & A's

What changes have been made in relation to the prescribing of self-care products?

The NHS clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) in Chorley, South Ribble and Greater Preston support GP practices in promoting self-care.

Self-care is a term used to include all the actions taken by people to recognise, treat, protect their own health, choosing appropriate treatments to manage illnesses and/or long term conditions.

Unless a patient meets a particular exemption, the CCGs have decided to stop funding prescriptions for a range of products that are classed as 'low priority'.

This will be because they are readily available over the counter in pharmacies and on the shelves in supermarkets, and includes:

- Treatments for minor ailments, including medicines like paracetamol, ibuprofen, head lice lotion and indigestion tablets.
- Treatments where there is little evidence that they have a real clinical benefit, including cough syrups, nasal congestion sprays, sore throat products and vitamin supplements.

To make sure that NHS resources are used widely, it has been agreed that only those treatments that are clinically effective and provide a clear health benefit to patients should be prescribed on NHS prescriptions.

Why have the changes been made to stop prescribing these products?

For some of the products there is not much clinical evidence that they are effective in treating minor illnesses or their symptoms, and for all of the products they are readily available in shops and supermarkets.

As local clinical commissioning groups, we have a responsibility to use public resources in an efficient way, that is 'value for money' for the tax payer, and it is expected that the local NHS will be able to save around £700,000 a year by making these changes.

I have a long term condition and because of that I experience on-going chronic pain. How will I get the amount pain medication I need when there are restrictions for over the counter purchasing?

It is likely that your GP will still be able to prescribe you those products, as you will probably still be eligible to receive these prescriptions because of your long term condition and pain management needs.

Which patients will be 'exempt' and will still be able to receive these types of products on prescriptions?

Your GP will use the policy to determine if you are exempt or not. The exemptions depend on the individual product or type of medication, but there are some exemptions for the following people:

- People with long term conditions and pain management needs
- Babies
- Children
- Pregnant women
- Breastfeeding mothers
- Patients being care for at the end of their life

What is the full list of the types of products that will not routinely prescribed going forward?

- Pain killers for acute minor aches and pains, including migraine
- Management of coughs and colds, blocked nose, sore throat, including decongestants, nasal drops and inhalations
- Treatments for non-serious diarrhoea
- Antihistamines and allergy preparations for non-serious stings and insect bites
- Treatment of head lice infestation using head lice lotions and shampoos
- Treatments of occasional indigestion and heartburn, including that resulting from over-indulgence
- Treatments for oral or vaginal thrush
- Antiperspirants for excess sweating
- Athlete's foot creams and powders
- Barrier creams and treatments for non-infected, unbroken nappy rash
- Creams for the removal of female facial hair
- Cream and gels for mild acne
- Ear wax removers and softeners
- Soya based formula milks
- Hay fever preparations, including eye drops for allergies
- Lozenges, throat sprays, mouthwashes and gargles, including treatments for mouth ulcers
- Moisturisers and bath additives for minor dry skin conditions
- Treatments for skin rashes, including mild-moderate eczema
- Treatments for threadworm
- Tonics, vitamins and minerals supplements, herbal and complementary remedies
- Antifungal nail paint
- Cold sore treatments
- Treatments for eye infections, including uncomplicated conjunctivitis

- Sun creams /lotions
- Teethinggels
- Treatments for infantcolic
- Fluoridetoothpastes
- Warts and verrucaetreatment

What if I don't currently pay for prescriptions and can't afford this change?

Most of the products are available readily at a reasonable price, particularly if they are pharmacy and supermarket 'own brand' versions of the products.

You may also be able to access support from the local minor ailments 'pharmacy first' scheme, which your GP can tell you more about.

Where can I get the listed medications from if not from my GP?

Many of the medications are available from the high street or from supermarkets. Pain killers can be bought from as little as 20 pence and other medications can be bought for less than the cost of a prescription.

I have purchased a prescription pre-payment certificate specifically for one or more of these self-care products – can I get a refund?

Your local CCG will reimburse prescription prepayment certificates where these have been purchased by patients for the sole purpose of obtaining one or more self-care product on prescription. If this is the case, please contact the customer care team on 01772 214601.

Where can I get advice or support about self-care and appropriate medicines?

You can find a wealth of information about self-care on the NHS Choices website. Visit the site and search 'live well' or 'self-care': www.nhs.uk.

You should also make the most of your local pharmacist, who will be very knowledgeable about ways to treat your minor illness or symptoms. You do not need to make an appointment to speak to your pharmacist. Many pharmacies are open in the evenings and at weekends. Any consultation you have with the pharmacist will be confidential and discrete, in a private area of the pharmacy.

Prescribing of gluten free food: Questions and answers

What changes have been made in relation to the prescribing of gluten free foods?

For the past 30 years the NHS has prescribed gluten free foods to patients who have been diagnosed with coeliac disease, a service that was provided when

gluten free foods weren't readily available.

Until recently, patients with coeliac disease who were registered with GP practices in Chorley, South Ribble and Greater Preston could still be prescribed gluten free bread and flour.

Following an engagement exercise with patients and GPs, the decision was made to stop funding the prescribing of all gluten free food, which came into effect on 5 December.

Why have you stopped prescribing gluten free products?

The reason for this is that in recent years the variety and accessibility of gluten free products has both improved and increased, which means that as well as being of a higher quality, they are also not as expensive as they once were.

Unfortunately the NHS still gets charged more than double the price for gluten free items than people can buy them for in supermarkets, making them more expensive when provided by prescription than when purchased directly by patients in shops. The reason for the NHS being charged so much for these products is unclear, but it is a big part of what makes them an inefficient use of already limited NHS resources.

Almost £200,000 is spent on the prescribing of gluten free products annually.

Why has this been chosen as a change to help the local NHS save money?

Because gluten free products don't actually need to be prescribed for clinical reasons (for example, they are not products that can only be given following a clinical assessment or diagnosis), they come under the banner of 'low priority' prescribing.

Other 'low priority prescribing' items include other products and medicines that are also readily available on shop shelves or over the counter in pharmacies, such as paracetamol, cold and flu treatments, head lice lotion, moisturisers or hay fever remedies.

What if I don't currently pay for prescriptions and can't afford this change?

The NHS supported the supply of gluten free foods on prescription at a time when it was much more expensive for people to buy by any other means. Now this gap in price is significantly reduced, the NHS considers gluten free food to be comparable to the supply of other foods.

I have purchased a prescription pre-payment certificate specifically for gluten free food – can I get a refund?

Your local CCG will reimburse prescription prepayment certificates where these have been purchased by patients for the sole purpose of obtaining gluten-free

food on prescription. If this is the case, please contact the customer care team on 01772214601.

What happens if I have a repeat prescription for gluten free foods?

The changes will come into force once you get to a review point in your prescription, and the medicines coordinator in your GP practice will support you and your practice in the transition of these changes.

Where can I get advice or support about coeliac disease or gluten free food?

You can find a wealth of information about coeliac disease, its symptoms and its causes on the NHS Choices website and search 'coeliac': www.nhs.uk