

PRESCRIBING COMMISSIONING POLICY: SELF-CARE

Wirral CCG will not fund the prescribing of medicines and treatments for minor, short-term conditions where:

- **Self-care is the most appropriate route**
- **Medicines and treatments are available to buy over the counter**

Wirral CCG will not fund the prescribing of medicines and treatments for ANY medical condition where:

- **There is insufficient evidence of clinical benefit or cost-effectiveness**
- **The medical condition has no need of clinical treatment**

Medicines for the prevention of malaria, which are not prescription only medicines, can be purchased directly from community pharmacies.

Note: Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional clinical circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy.

Individual cases will be reviewed at the Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group Individual Funding Request Panel upon receipt of a completed application form from the patient's GP, Consultant or Clinician.

Applications cannot be considered from patients personally.

Self-care (over the counter (OTC)) and Products of Limited Value Prescribing Policy

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SELF-CARE (OTC) AND PRODUCTS OF LIMITED CLINICAL VALUE PRESCRIBING POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Self-care is widely acknowledged as an important solution to managing demand and keeping the NHS sustainable. Supporting people to self-manage common conditions such as coughs and colds could help bring down the 57 million GP consultations each year for minor ailments, a situation which costs the NHS approximately £2 billion and takes up to an hour a day on average for every GP.
- 1.2. Promoting the concept of self-care and increasing the awareness that there are alternatives to making GP appointments, or attendance at OOHs or A&E departments with minor conditions, will encourage patients to explore self-care in the future, so changing the culture of dependency on the NHS.
- 1.3. Wirral CCG spends approximately £2m per year on medicines and products that can be used for the treatment of minor ailments (appendix 1). Many of which are available to buy over the counter from community pharmacies and retail outlets such as supermarkets. It is recognised that some of this cost is attributable to long-term or complex conditions. However, removing specific medications from routine prescription for minor, short-term conditions and for conditions, such as a common cold, sore throat or minor cough, which would naturally get better themselves in the majority of patients if untreated, would release money to treat more serious conditions such as heart disease and diabetes and would help maintain financial balance in the health economy
- 1.4. Some products that are currently prescribed are clinically ineffective or are not cost effective. These treatments will not have undergone rigorous clinical trials to demonstrate that they work and it is inappropriate to spend the local NHS budget on products that do not have proven efficacy or safety in preference to medicines supported by robust clinical evidence.
- 1.5. Medicines for malaria prophylaxis are not reimbursable under the NHS. Some medicines for the prevention of malaria are available for the patient to purchase over the counter at a community pharmacy. Prescription only medicines for malaria prophylaxis must be prescribed on a private prescription. Selection of treatment is dependent on destination please see NHS Choices <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/malaria/pages/prevention.aspx>

2. SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

- 2.1 The Self-Care (OTC) Policy sets out Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group's approach to ensure that prescribing of certain products in the following circumstances is stopped and to support prescribers in implementing this decision:

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- Medicines and treatments available to purchase over-the-counter, used for the treatment of minor, short-term medical conditions.
- Medicines and treatments where there is insufficient evidence of clinical benefit or cost-effectiveness.
- Medicines and treatments that are prescribed to treat conditions where there is no clinical need for treatment.
- Malaria prophylaxis

2.2 This policy will ensure equity of service for all residents of the Wirral and will allow the same expectation of what will be provided from the GP Practice or other services.

2.3 This policy applies to all services contracted by or delivered by the NHS across Wirral CCG including:

- GP Practices – GPs and any other Prescribers
- Out of hours and extended hours providers
- Acute Hospitals
- Out-Patient Clinics
- NHS Community Providers
- Independent providers
- Community pharmacies

2.4 This policy applies to all people (adults and children) who are registered with a GP in the Wirral (permanent or temporary resident) or who access a NHS service in the Wirral.

3. MEDICINES AVAILABLE OVER-THE-COUNTER, USED FOR SHORT-TERM, MINOR MEDICAL CONDITIONS

3.1 Most minor ailments are generally not serious and can often be managed by the individual. Products aimed at treating the symptoms of many of these ailments may not offer value for money and should not normally be prescribed at NHS expense.

3.2 Patients with short-term, minor ailments and common conditions will be directed to community pharmacies for advice, or other outlets such as supermarkets and local shops, to purchase over-the-counter treatments.

3.3 Community pharmacists have a wealth of experience and training, and are well placed to contribute to the management of minor ailments and common conditions. No appointments are needed and the community pharmacy is often open longer hours than the GP Practice and is also open at weekends.

3.4 Secondary Care will support self-care interventions and refer patients to the community pharmacy if appropriate, particularly where patients have presented inappropriately to A&E, the Urgent Care Centre or Out of Hours Services.

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3.5 People will be encouraged to be responsible for their own health and well-being, by all healthcare professionals.

3.6 Patient information leaflets are available for certain conditions, either via sources such as NHS Choices or via the GP Practice prescribing system (EMIS Web), to ensure that people are made aware of warning signs or symptoms that would require them to see their GP.

4. MEDICINES WHERE THERE IS LIMITED EVIDENCE OF CLINICAL BENEFIT OR COST-EFFECTIVENESS

4.1 Some products that are currently prescribed in the Wirral have no proven clinical efficacy or are not cost-effective. Many of the products in this category are not licensed drugs under the Medicines Act.

4.2 This means that they have not undergone the rigorous clinical trials as required by the regulatory authorities to confirm their safety, quality and efficacy.

4.3 There is no Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) for prescribers to consult and therefore pose a risk to the prescriber when unlicensed products are prescribed.

4.4 Many of these products are classed as 'food substitutes' and are not covered by Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) regulations (GMS contract) and/or do not appear in the current British National Formulary (BNF) or the Drug Tariff.

4.5 They may not be manufactured to the same high pharmaceutical standards used for licensed medicines; hence there is no guarantee of consistency in formulation and potency.

4.6 It is inappropriate to direct NHS resources towards products that do not have proven efficacy or safety in preference to licensed medicines supported by robust clinical evidence.

4.7 Such judgements should be based purely on clinical factors and should not be influenced by socio-economic aspects such as the patient's readiness and ability to purchase.

Example medications included in this section are:

- Antioxidant supplements for age related macular degeneration (this does not include treatments such as Lucentis for Wet Macular Degeneration).
- Lactase enzyme drops (for colic)
- Supplements for joints (e.g. glucosamine and chondroitin)

5. MEDICINES THAT ARE PRESCRIBED TO TREAT CONDITIONS WHERE THERE IS NO CLINICAL NEED FOR TREATMENT.

5.1 Conditions such as a common cold, sore throat or minor cough are ones that would naturally get better themselves in the majority of patients if untreated.

5.2 Products to help soothe such conditions (e.g. analgesics, cough mixtures, sore throat lozenges) will no longer be prescribed.

5.3 Such judgements should be based purely on clinical factors and supporting evidence and should not be influenced by socio-economic aspects such as the patient's readiness and ability to purchase.

5.4 Norethisterone to delay menstruation for social reasons, e.g. holidays, sport, etc. should not be prescribed on the NHS.

6. Malaria prophylaxis

6.1 The British National Formulary (BNF) states that medicines for malaria prophylaxis are not prescribable on the NHS.

6.2 The Department of Health issued guidance in February 1995 (FHSL (95)7) which is still current. This guidance states that private prescription forms should be used to prescribe drugs for malaria prophylaxis.

6.3 The NHS Standard General Medical Services Contract 2014 states that a GP may accept a fee for prescribing or providing drugs or medicines for malaria chemoprophylaxis.

6.4 Some medicines for the prevention of malaria are available for the patient to purchase over the counter at a community pharmacy. If this is the case a GP need not write a prescription. Prescription only medicines for malaria prophylaxis must be prescribed on a private prescription

7. SELF-CARE PRESCRIBING REVIEWS

7.1 Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group has a duty to ensure that the local NHS budget is spent in an appropriate way.

7.2 The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that all agreed actions are carried out by healthcare professionals according to this policy.

7.3 Implementation of the policy will be monitored via ePACT data and recorded within the CCG Financial Recovery Plan.

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7.4 This policy supersedes the Wirral prescribing policy malaria prophylaxis, 2010 and Wirral prescribing policy glucosamine, 2010.

Appendix 1 Examples of medicines that can be purchased over-the-counter for the treatment of minor, short-term conditions and therefore should not normally be prescribed in those circumstances.*

*Note: this list and examples given is not exhaustive.
 Some of these medications may continue to be prescribed where prescribing is for chronic conditions e.g. analgesics for osteoarthritis

Product category	Example products
Analgesics (pain killers)	Paracetamol tablets and capsules Paracetamol liquid Co-codamol 8/500 tablets and capsules
Topical pain relief	Ibuprofen gel/cream/spray Diclofenac gel/cream/spray
Oral antihistamines (for allergies such as hayfever)	Loratadine Cetirizine Chlorphenamine
Steroid nasal sprays for allergies such as hayfever	Beclometasone Fluticasone
Dental products	Mouthwashes Teething gel Toothpaste
Indigestion remedies and antacids	Gaviscon liquid and tablets ranitidine
Emollient and moisturising preparations	E45 [®] cream Oilatum [®]
Sore Throat products	Sore throat lozenges Sore throat sprays Sore mouth gels
Decongestant nasal sprays and tablets	Pseudoephedrine tablets Sodium chloride nasal spray Xylometazoline/Oxymetazoline/Ephedrine nasal sprays
Sunscreens	High factor sunscreens, branded or own brand
Vaginal moisturisers	Lubricant gels/creams Feminine washes
Warts and verrucae treatments	Salicylic acid and/or lactic acid ointment/solution/plasters/gels/paints
Topical circulatory products	Heparinoid gel/cream
Cosmetic moisturisers	Bio-Oil [®] Lotil [®]

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Ear Wax products	Olive oil ear drops
Cough and Cold Treatments	Pholcodeine linctus Simple linctus Menthol & Eucalyptus Inhalation Sore throat sprays
Antifungal treatments (e.g. for athletes foot and thrush)	Miconazole cream Clotrimazole cream
Allergy eye drops (e.g. for hay fever)	Sodium cromoglicate eye drops
Medicated Shampoos	Ketoconazole shampoo Capsal [®] shampoo
Antibacterial Eye Drops (e.g. to treat conjunctivitis)	Chloramphenicol eye drops
Antiperspirants	Aluminium chloride sprays/roll-ons/solutions
Haemorrhoids treatment	Anusol cream Proctosedyl_Oint
Oral rehydration sachets	Diroalyte [®]
Head lice preparations	Malathion lotion

Appendix 2. References/resources and associated documents

- Guidance on self-care prescribing, v1.0, January 2016. Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group
- Self care for minor ailments. T8 January 2015 V 2.0. PrescQIPP. Available at: <https://www.prescqipp.info/resources/send/141-self-care-webkit/1748-t8-self-care-for-minor-ailments>. Accessed 5th August 2016
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- Joint Formulary Committee, September 2016 (70). British National Formulary (BNF). London: Pharmaceutical Press.
- NHS England, The NHS Standard General Medical Services Contract 2014. Gateway reference: 01538
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Acknowledgements:

- MLCSU Medicines Management and Optimisation Team – West Cheshire CCG
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