

To all GP Practices

Tel : 028 95363926  
Fax : 028 95363126  
Web Site: [www.hscboard.hscni.net](http://www.hscboard.hscni.net)7<sup>th</sup> December 2016

Dear Colleagues

**OPTIMISING MEDICINES USE IN PRIMARY CARE BY REDUCING THE PRESCRIBING OF OTC TREATMENTS FOR COMMON CONDITIONS AND NON EVIDENCE BASED MEDICINES**

As you will be aware, Mr Richard Pengelly, Permanent Secretary from the Department of Health, wrote to you on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016 to secure your immediate support to reduce the prescribing of the following types of medicines:

- Medicines for the treatment of minor conditions and self-limiting illnesses which may be purchased at low cost without the need for a GP appointment or prescription, *or*
- Medicines with limited evidence of efficacy

**Medicines for the treatment of minor conditions and self-limiting illnesses**

There are a number of minor self-limiting illnesses for which effective treatments can be purchased by the patient either from a community pharmacy or supermarket. Examples are included in Appendix 1.

**Medicines with limited evidence of efficacy**

Appendix 1 also contains a list of medicines where prescribing should be stopped due to limited evidence of their efficacy. Further details on these medicines can be found at:

<http://niformulary.hscni.net/PrescribingNewsletters/MedicinesManagement/vol6/vol6s4/Pages/default.aspx>

**Resources to Support Implementation**

The HSCB has developed resources to assist practices with this work and these are included in Appendix 1 and 2. Both documents may be useful tools for either reception or clinical staff to use when dealing with patient requests for medication for minor conditions and self-limiting conditions or where there is limited evidence of efficacy, and these are available at:

<http://niformulary.hscni.net/PrescribingNewsletters/OTC%20Medicines/Pages/default.aspx>

Further copies of the “Treat Yourself” patient information leaflets and posters (see attached) will be sent to practices in the coming weeks by the HSCB.

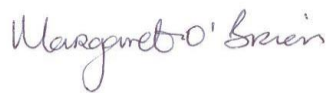
There are a number of other patient resources available to support GP practices in reducing demand for inappropriate or unnecessary consultations (see links below). Practices should consider adding these links to their practice websites to help encourage patients to take responsibility for their own health where appropriate.

- HSCB Formulary Patient Zone  
<http://niformulary.hscni.net/PatientZone/Pages/default.aspx>
- Stay Well campaign <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-use-your-health-services>

### **Action required by GP Practices**

GP practices should now take steps to ensure that their prescribing is in line with the letter from Richard Pengelly. If you would like any further information or advice on this issue, please contact your local Pharmacy Adviser.

Yours sincerely



Dr Margaret O'Brien  
Head of GMS



Mr Joe Brogan  
Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management

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## Prescribing of Medicines for Minor Conditions and Self-limiting Illnesses

In line with guidance from the NI Department of Health, this GP practice does not prescribe medicines:

- (i) that can be purchased over-the-counter by patients when they are being used to treat minor conditions or self-limiting illnesses, *or*
- (ii) where there is no evidence base for their use.

The following points should be noted:

- This practice promotes self-care for **minor conditions and self-limiting illnesses** (see below for examples)
- Medicines on the lists below should be purchased by the patient from community pharmacies or supermarkets and **not prescribed on HS21**
- Patients should be advised that their local community pharmacist can provide advice and help to manage minor conditions and self-limiting illnesses

Clinical judgement should be used when considering whether it is acceptable to ask a patient to purchase their medication e.g. paracetamol PRN for headaches or teething in babies should be purchased, however regular full dose paracetamol for chronic pain should be prescribed due to the quantities and processes involved in managing an on-going illness.

### 1. OTC indications and examples of restricted medicines

OTC indication	Examples of restricted medicines
<b>Aches and pains (mild) e.g. headache, occasional migraine, teething</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-inflammatory gels or creams e.g. ibuprofen gel, diclofenac gel</li> <li>• Oral painkillers e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen</li> </ul>
<b>Athlete's foot</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antifungal creams e.g. clotrimazole, miconazole, terbinafine</li> </ul>
<b>Cold sores</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-viral creams e.g. acyclovir 5%</li> </ul>
<b>Colic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colic drops e.g. Infacol®, Dentinox Colic Drops®, Colief®</li> <li>• Gripe water</li> </ul>
<b>Coughs, colds and sore throats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cough bottles</li> <li>• Lozenges and spays for sore throats</li> <li>• Oral painkillers/antipyretics e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen</li> <li>• Nasal decongestants e.g. pseudoephedrine tables, decongestant sprays and drops</li> </ul>
<b>Diarrhoea (occasional) or constipation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral rehydration solutions e.g. Dioralyte®</li> <li>• Antidiarrhoeal medicines e.g. loperamide</li> <li>• Laxatives e.g. ispaghula husk (Fybogel®), bisacodyl,</li> </ul>

	lactulose, senna
<b>Ear wax</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drops for softening ear wax</li> </ul>
<b>Fungal nail infections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amorolfine 5% nail lacquer (mild infections only– max 2 nails affected)</li> </ul>
<b>Haemorrhoids (Piles)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Haemorrhoid creams, ointments and suppositories e.g. Anusol®</li> </ul>
<b>Hayfever and allergies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral antihistamines e.g. cetirizine, loratadine, chlorphenamine</li> <li>• Antihistamine creams</li> <li>• Steroid nasal sprays e.g. beclometasone, fluticasone</li> </ul>
<b>Head lice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head lice lotions and sprays e.g. dimeticone lotion</li> </ul>
<b>Indigestion and heartburn (mild)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antacids e.g. co-magaldrox (Maalox®, Mucogel®)</li> <li>• Alginates e.g. Gaviscon®</li> </ul>
<b>Infant feeding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baby milks e.g. comfort milks, lactose free formulas for colic, reflux milks</li> </ul> <p>(Note - some babies may require cow's milk free formulas on HSC prescription where clinically appropriate)</p>
<b>Nappy rash</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barrier creams and ointments e.g. Metanium®, Sudocrem®, Zinc and Castor oil cream</li> </ul>
<b>Oral health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mouthwashes e.g. chlorhexidine</li> </ul>
<b>Sunscreen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunscreens unless for ACBS approved conditions i.e. skin protection against UV radiation in abnormal cutaneous photosensitivity resulting from genetic disorders or photodermatoses, including vitiligo and those resulting from radiotherapy, chronic or recurrent herpes simplex labialis</li> </ul>
<b>Threadworms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mebendazole tablets and suspension</li> </ul>
<b>Vaginal thrush</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral antifungal e.g. fluconazole capsule</li> <li>• Topical antifungals e.g. clotrimazole cream and pessaries</li> </ul>
<b>Vitamins and minerals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All vitamins and minerals unless in line with an ACBS approved indication, i.e. only in the management of actual or potential vitamin or mineral deficiency; they are not to be prescribed as dietary supplements or as a general 'pick-me-up'</li> </ul>

## 2. Non-evidence based products

<p>Products on Stop List</p> <p>Prescribing of these products is <b>not</b> supported by the HSCB</p>	<p>Bio-Oil</p> <p>CoEnzyme Q10</p> <p>Colic products e.g. Infacol<sup>®</sup> or Dentinox<sup>®</sup></p> <p>Comfort Milks (Aptamil<sup>®</sup>, Cow &amp; Gate<sup>®</sup> and SMA<sup>®</sup>) or Colief<sup>®</sup> drops</p> <p>Cubitan<sup>®</sup></p> <p>Eye Supplements e.g. Icaps<sup>®</sup>, OcuVite<sup>®</sup>, Macushield<sup>®</sup>, PreserVision<sup>®</sup>, Viteyes<sup>®</sup></p> <p>Gamolenic acid / Evening Primrose Oil</p> <p>Glucosamine containing products</p> <p>Gluten free non-staple foods eg biscuits, muffins, sausage rolls</p> <p>Green Lipped Mussel (Pernaton gel<sup>®</sup>)</p> <p>Omega 3 Products e.g. Eye Q<sup>®</sup> and Efalex<sup>®</sup></p> <p>Spatone<sup>®</sup></p>
<p>Products on the Limited Evidence List</p> <p>Products on this list must not be routinely prescribed and reviewed to ensure used only in approved circumstances</p>	<p>Omacor<sup>®</sup> / Maxepa<sup>®</sup></p> <p>Probiotics e.g. VSL#3<sup>®</sup>, lactobacillus, bifidobacterium</p> <p>Quinine</p> <p>Vitamins – Multivitamins, Ascorbic Acid, Forceval<sup>®</sup>, Ketovite<sup>®</sup>, Vitamins BPC, Vivioptal<sup>®</sup>, Cod liver oil</p>

## **REFERRAL TO LOCAL PHARMACY - NO PRESCRIPTION REQUIRED**

You have a common condition that can be treated with a medication that is available to buy over the counter from your local pharmacy.

You do not need to make an appointment to speak to the pharmacist, just pop in anytime and they will be happy to help you.

Ask the pharmacist for help and advice on the most appropriate medication to relieve your symptoms for:

Aches and pains (minor)		Head lice	
Athlete's foot		Heartburn and indigestion (mild)	
Cold sores		Infant feeding	
Colic		Nappy Rash	
Constipation (occasional)		Oral health	
Coughs and colds		Sore throat	
Diarrhoea (occasional)		Sunscreen	
Ear wax		Teething	
Fungal nail infections		Threadworm	
Haemorrhoids (Piles)		Vaginal Thrush	
Hay fever and allergies		Vitamins	
Headache and migraine (mild)		Other:	

**If at any time you are concerned about your condition or if your symptoms are not improving after a few days of treatment with the over the counter medications you should contact the local pharmacist or the surgery for more advice.**

Please contact the surgery for further advice on [add tel.no.]

For more information visit

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/community-pharmacists>

<http://niformulary.hscni.net/PatientZone/SC/Pages/default.aspx>