

OVER THE COUNTER MEDICATION

Did you know the cost of processing a prescription from it being ordered at your GP Practice to it being dispensed by a pharmacy is around £35, this takes into account the time it takes for admin staff, GP and Pharmacy Team to complete the process, so if you order paracetamol that can be obtained from a local convenience store for as little as 37p it actually costs the NHS approximately £35. During the financial year or 2021/22 the cost of medications/appliance's prescribed in primary care and dispensed in the community was £8.90 billion! As per the government policy to reduce the amount of money the NHS spends on minor ailments we as a Practice will be making some changes and will no longer be prescribing over the counter items. Please see an extract below that is on the NHS website which explains the guidelines in more details.

Why can't I get a prescription for an over-the-counter medicine?

A GP, nurse or pharmacist will generally not give you a prescription for over-the-counter (OTC) medicines for a range of minor health conditions.

This is because of government policy to reduce the amount of money the NHS spends on prescriptions for treating minor conditions that usually get better on their own.

Instead, OTC medicines are available to buy in a pharmacy or supermarket. [Find your nearest pharmacy.](#)

The team of health professionals at your local pharmacy can offer help and clinical advice to manage minor health concerns. If your symptoms suggest it's more serious, they'll ensure you get the care you need.

You can buy OTC medicines for any of these conditions:

- acute sore throat
- minor burns and scalds
- conjunctivitis
- mild cystitis
- coughs, colds and nasal congestion
- mild dry skin
- cradle cap
- mild irritant dermatitis
- dandruff
- mild to moderate hay fever
- diarrhoea (adults)
- dry eyes and sore tired eyes
- mouth ulcers
- earwax
- nappy rash
- excessive sweating
- infant colic
- sunburn
- infrequent cold sores of the lip
- sun protection
- infrequent constipation
- teething or mild toothache
- infrequent migraine
- threadworms
- insect bites and stings
- travel sickness
- mild acne
- warts and verrucas

- haemorrhoids (piles)
- oral thrush
- head lice
- prevention of tooth decay
- indigestion and heartburn
- ringworm or athlete's foot
- minor pain, discomfort and fever (such as aches and sprains, headache, period pain, and back pain)

For information on how these conditions are treated, [look up your condition in the health A to Z](#).

Exceptions

In some cases, you can still get prescriptions for medicines used to treat these conditions.

You may still be prescribed a medicine for a condition on the list if:

- you need treatment for a long-term condition, for example regular pain relief for chronic arthritis or inflammatory bowel disease
- you need treatment for more complex forms of minor illnesses, for example migraines that are very bad and where OTC medicines do not work
- you need an OTC medicine to treat a side effect of a prescription medicine or symptom of another illness, such as constipation when taking certain painkillers
- the medicine has a licence that does not allow the product to be sold to certain groups of patients. This could include babies, children or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding
- the person prescribing thinks that a patient cannot treat themselves, for example because of mental health problems

Probiotics, vitamins and minerals

GPs, nurses or pharmacists will also generally no longer prescribe probiotics or some vitamins and minerals. You can get the vitamins and minerals you need from eating a healthy, varied and balanced diet, or buy them at a pharmacy or supermarket.

Why has the NHS reduced these prescriptions?

Before these changes in 2018, the NHS spent around £569 million a year on prescriptions for medicines that can be bought from a pharmacy or supermarket, such as paracetamol.

By reducing the amount it spends on OTC medicines, the NHS can give priority to treatments for people with more serious conditions, such as cancer, diabetes and mental health problems.