

Medicines Optimisation

Best Practice Guidance for care Homes – *Bulletin 31*

Self-Care

What is self-care?

Self-Care is the action that individuals take for themselves, on behalf of and with others to develop, protect, maintain, and improve their health, wellbeing, or wellness.

Self-care is recommended when you have a minor condition which doesn't normally need medical care (from a doctor or nurse) or any prescribed treatment to get better. Self-management of symptoms using advice from a healthcare profession or medication which can be purchased can be used.

Many minor ailments can be treated at the care home where appropriate.

- **GPs may recommend** that a resident, relative or care staff **purchase** over the counter (OTC) remedies to treat minor ailments, e.g., olive oil for ear wax.
- **Residents (or their relatives)** may provide their own OTC products **as Self-care** for ailments such as pain relief and cough and cold remedies which can be bought from pharmacies and/or supermarkets without a prescription. Consultation with a Pharmacist is recommended.

NHS England has advised that there are **exceptions** to the self-care guidance such as:

- patients being treated for a long-term condition.
- circumstances where the product license does not allow the medicine to be bought over the counter (e.g., age restrictions, disease interactions)

Providers will need to liaise closely with clinicians / health care professionals to identify people who are affected by exceptions and make appropriate arrangements.

Issues for providers to consider.

It is good practice on admission to the care home to discuss health needs and medicines with the resident and their family. This should also include the use of OTC products.

- Care homes should have a policy to support people who wish or need, to self-care. It should outline the necessary safeguards to support people to self-care when carers or relatives provide OTC products.
- To ensure people who may lack mental capacity to make decisions are protected.
- Verbal or written instructions must be recorded in the individual care plan.
- Resident purchased OTC products are not for general use and must remain specific to that resident.
- There should be a clear care plan including how reviews will be triggered to ensure that medicines given are safe and still appropriate.

Long Term Self-Care

Some residents may wish to take self-care items long term, i.e., Vitamin D, other vitamins or supplements etc This is acceptable if it has gone through all of the checks required for short term self-care items.

Supporting residents to self-care

Access to OTC medicines to self-care is an issue of equality and care homes should have policies in place to support residents who wish to access OTC products in a timely manner. **This is different to the use of homely remedies**, homely remedies are for short term symptom relief, up to 3 days, self-care can be long term use.

OTC products can be used to:

- Alleviate the symptoms of a condition that is self-limiting as it will heal/be cured of its own accord.
- Treat a condition which lends itself to self-care, i.e., that the person suffering does not normally need to seek medical care or treatment for the condition.

These conditions include but are not limited to the following:

Diarrhea	Infrequent constipation	Mild acne
Minor pain and fever (aches, sprains, headache & back pain)	Ringworm / athlete's foot	Indigestion and heartburn
Dry eyes / sore tired eyes	Oral thrush	Earwax
Head lice	Insect bites and stings	Excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis)
Conjunctivitis	Mild irritant dermatitis	Minor burns and scalds
Acute sore throat	Mild dry skin	Mild cystitis
Infrequent cold sores of the lip	Hemorrhoids	Coughs, colds, and nasal congestion
Mouth ulcers	Warts and verrucae	Dandruff

Pharmacy advice for self-care

If you're not sure if the condition is minor, or one that goes away of its own accord, i.e., a virus, or if you just want advice on how to help the resident relieve the symptoms your local pharmacist can help.

Local pharmacies provide NHS services in the same way as GP practices – and pharmacists train for five years in the use of medicines before they qualify as health professionals. What's more, it's a walk-in service, open all day. You do not have to use the pharmacy who supplies your regular repeat medicines to support self-care as there may be a pharmacy closer to you.

A pharmacist will assess symptoms and consider any long-term conditions, and the medicines that your resident is taking, before providing a recommendation. They will either:

- Support/advise in the decision that self-care is appropriate for the resident.
- Sell an OTC medicine (which doesn't need a prescription or visit to a GP) that will help relieve symptoms and make the resident more comfortable.
- Signpost the resident via you to the right medical care if need.

General information

- All purchased medicines must be checked for potential interactions with prescribed medicines. Please make sure you or the resident tell the pharmacist all the medicines that are being taken including PRN's and other OTC / self-care items.
- Residents (or their relatives) may provide their own OTC products following consultation with the GP or Pharmacist. In all care settings receipt **MUST** be recorded on the back of the MAR chart so that the person administering medicines is aware of what else may have potentially been taken. If the care staff are responsible for administration, this should be recorded on a MAR chart and good practice should be followed.
- All OTC products purchased on behalf of the resident or brought into a care setting should be checked, to make sure they are suitable for use, in date and stored according to the manufacturer guidance.

References

Title	Best Practice Guidance – Self Care
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Scope	Information for Care Homes
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Evidence base / Legislation	Level of Evidence: <i>A. based on national research-based evidence and is considered best evidence</i> B. mix of national and local consensus <i>C. based on local good practice and consensus in the absence of national research based information.</i>
Dissemination	Is there any reason why any part of this document should not be available on the public website? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes / No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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