

Medicines Optimisation Best Practice Guidance for Care Services

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 GP/Nurse/Health Professional) 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 the person, relative or care staff **purchase** over the counter (OTC) remedies to treat minor ailments, e.g., olive oil for ear wax.
- **People (or their relatives)** may provide their own OTC products **as Self-care** for ailments such as pain relief, vitamins e.g. Vit D 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).

Care homes 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 person 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.
- Person purchased OTC products are not for general use and must remain specific to that person.
- 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 people may wish to take self-care items long term, i.e., Vitamin D or 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 people to self-care

Access to OTC medicines to self-care is an issue of equality and care services should have policies in place to support people 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:

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| • Acne (mild) | • Diarrhoea | • Irritant dermatitis (mild) |
| • Acute sore throat | • Dry eyes / sore tired eyes | • Insect bites and stings |
| • Burns and scalds (minor) | • Dry skin (minor) | • Mouth ulcers |
| • Cold sores of the lip (infrequent) | • Earwax | • Oral thrush |
| • Conjunctivitis | • Excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis) | • Pain including aches, sprains, headache & back pain (mild) |
| • Constipation (infrequent) | • Fevers (mild) | • Ringworm / athlete's foot |
| • Coughs, colds, and nasal congestion | • Head lice | • Warts and verrucae |
| • Cystitis (mild) | • Haemorrhoids (piles) | |
| • Dandruff | • Indigestion and heartburn | |

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 person relieve the symptoms your local pharmacist can help.

Local pharmacies provide NHS services in the same way as GP practices. 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 person is taking, before providing a recommendation. They will either:

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

General information

- All purchased medicines must be checked for potential interactions with prescribed medicines. Please make sure you or the person tell the pharmacist all the medicines that are being taken including PRN's and other OTC / self-care items.
- People (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/eMAR 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/eMAR chart and good practice should be followed.
- All OTC products purchased on behalf of the person 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
Description of policy	To inform healthcare professionals
Scope	Information for Care Homes
Prepared by	Prescribing & Medicines Management Team
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"/>
Approved by	Medicines Optimisation Team
Authorised by	Medicines Optimisation Team
Review date and by whom	Medicines Optimisation Team Nov 2026
Date of issue	Update agreed by TAG Dec 2024

Version Control (To be completed by policy owner)

Version	Date	Author	Status	Comment
0.1	Dec 18	IK	DRAFT	Formatting amended. ST emailed to comment and approve. Minor amendments made
1.0	Dec 18	IK / SP-C	Final	STM approved via email
1.1	Jun 21	SP-C	Review	Review comments made – shared with care home team for comments
1.2	Jul 21	Medicines Optimisation senior team	Review	Reviewed amendments and suggested changes made
2.0	July 21	Medicines Optimisation Senior Team	Final	Amendments made following discussion at STM, shared for final comments, none received - published
2.1	August 2023	Medicines Optimisation Team LE	Final	Uploaded to new template only
2.3	November 2024	Medicine Optimisation Team RH, HH	Review	Review, minor wording updates. Title change. Formatted