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Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board

Over the counter items - GP guide to self care

In March 2018, NHS England published guidance for conditions for which over the counter (OTC) items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care.[1] It listed 35 conditions plus probiotics and vitamins and minerals, as areas where self care may be more appropriate. However, there are some exceptions to this guidance listed below.

Recommendations

General exceptions to the guidance

Please note: These exceptions do not apply to vitamins, minerals, probiotics and those self-limiting conditions where there is limited evidence of clinical effectiveness for the treatments used (e.g. OTC items for cough, sore throat and infant colic). Furthermore, being exempt from paying a prescription charge does not automatically warrant an exception to the guidance.

The specific scenarios where patients should continue to have their treatments prescribed are:

- Patients prescribed an OTC treatment for a long-term condition, e.g. regular pain relief for chronic arthritis or treatments for inflammatory bowel disease.
- For the treatment of more complex forms of minor illnesses, e.g. severe migraines that are unresponsive to OTC medicines.
- For those patients that have symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor, i.e. those with red flag symptoms, for example, indigestion with very bad pain.
- Treatment for complex patients, e.g. immunosuppressed patients.
- Patients on prescription only treatments.
- Patients prescribed OTC products to treat an adverse effect or symptom of a more complex illness.
- Circumstances where the product licence does not allow the product to be sold over the counter to certain groups of patients. This may vary by medicine, but could include babies, children and/or women who are pregnant or breast-feeding. Community pharmacists will be aware of what these are and can advise accordingly.
- Patients with a minor condition suitable for self care that has not responded sufficiently to treatment with an OTC product.
- Patients where the clinician considers that the presenting symptom is due to a condition that would not be considered a minor condition.
- Circumstances where the prescriber believes that, in their clinical judgement, exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the recommendation to self care.
- Individual patients where the clinician considers that their ability to self-manage is compromised as a consequence of medical, mental health or significant social vulnerability to the extent that their health and/or wellbeing could be adversely affected, if reliant on self care. Consideration should also be given to safeguarding issues.

This guide highlights information relevant to OTC medicines available to treat the conditions listed in the NHS England guidance.

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Items of low clinical effectiveness

1. Probiotics	There is currently insufficient clinical evidence to support the prescribing of probiotics within the NHS for the treatment or prevention of diarrhoea of any cause.[1,2,3] **Exceptions** • NHS England guidance in 2018 listed Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) approved indication or as per local policy as exceptions.[1] However, probiotic preparations are no longer listed in Part XV (Borderline Substances) in the Drug Tariff[4] and so **should not be prescribed on an NHS prescription** as an ACBS. For further information refer to PrescQIPP bulletin 262: Probiotics.
2. Vitamins and minerals	**Vitamins and minerals should not be prescribed as dietary supplements or as a general "pick-me-up"**, and these preparations should not be routinely prescribed in primary care due to limited evidence of clinical effectiveness.[1,5,6] Vitamins and minerals are essential nutrients which most people can and should get from eating a healthy, varied, and balanced diet. In most cases, dietary supplementation is unnecessary.[1] Many vitamin and mineral supplements are classified as foods and not medicines; they therefore do not have to go through the strict criteria laid down by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to confirm their quality, safety, and efficacy before reaching the market. It is therefore deemed not appropriate for such preparations to be routinely funded on the NHS.[1] Any prescribing not in-line with the listed exceptions should be discontinued.[1] **Exceptions** • Medically diagnosed deficiency, including for those patients who may have a lifelong or chronic condition or have undergone surgery that results in malabsorption. Continuing need should be reviewed on a regular basis. NB: maintenance or preventative treatment is not an exception. • Calcium and vitamin D for osteoporosis. • Malnutrition including alcoholism. • Patients suitable to receive Healthy Start Vitamins for pregnancy or children between the ages of six months to their fourth birthday (NB: this is not on prescription but commissioned separately). • Vitamin K (menadiol, phytomenadione) • Prescription only vitamin D analogues such as alfacalcidol. • Vitamin and mineral supplements recommended by the ACBS as borderline substances in patients with malnutrition.[4] Only in the management of actual or potential vitamin or mineral deficiency; not to be prescribed as dietary supplements or "pick-me-ups".[5]

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Self-limiting conditions

The lists below were correct at the time of publishing and are not an exhaustive list of OTC products. Prescribers should refer to a community pharmacist who will be able to advise further on specific preparations, drug interactions and suitability. Community pharmacists should check for 'red flag' symptoms for patients presenting with symptoms related to the conditions covered in this guide. Prescribers and community pharmacists should refer patients to the NHS website, the Self Care Forum, NHS 111, NHS 111 Wales or NHS 24 for further advice on when they should seek GP care.

Medication	For further advice see the product information leaflet.	
Common brands	Other brands may be available.	
OTC restrictions	For additional specific advice on restrictions, see the individual product information leaflet. These may vary between brands.	
P/GSL	P = Pharmacy only	GSL = General sales list

Condition	Exceptions[1]	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/ GSL
3. Acute sore throat	Red flag symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor	Benzydamine 0.15% mouthwash and oromucosal spray	• Difflam® Oral rinse[7]/ Sore Throat Rinse[8]/ Spray[9] • Oroeze® Mouthwash[10]/ Oromucosal Spray[11] • Benzydamine mouthwash[10]/ oromucosal spray (generic)[11]	• Children aged 12 years or under (oral rinse/ mouthwash), no age restriction for the oral spray • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Hypersensitivity to acetylsalicylic acid or other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) • Caution in patients with asthma	P

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Condition	Exceptions[1]	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/ GSL
3. Acute sore throat continued	Red flag symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor	Throat lozenges	• Covonia®[12] (chlorhexidine/ lidocaine) • Difflam® 3mg[13] (benzydamine) • Strefen®[14] (flurbiprofen) • Strepsils®[15] (amylmetacresol/ 2,4-dichlorobenzyl alcohol)	• Children under 12 years (Covonia®, Strefen®) • Children under six years (Difflam®3mg, Strepsils®) • Fructose intolerance • Pregnancy (Covonia® may be considered if necessary, flurbiprofen contraindicated in the last trimester), breastfeeding • Benzydamine – hypersensitivity to acetylsalicylic acid or other NSAIDs and caution in patients with asthma • Flurbiprofen – hypersensitivity to acetylsalicylic acid or other NSAIDs, active or historic peptic ulcer/ haemorrhage or GI ulceration, severe heart failure/ severe renal failure/severe hepatic failure, history of gastrointestinal bleeding or perforation, severe colitis or haemorrhagic, haematopoietic disorders related to previous NSAID therapy, concomitant NSAIDS/COX-2 inhibitors	GSL/P
		Throat sprays	• Covonia® Throat Spray[16] (chlorhexidine/ lidocaine) • Ultra Chloraseptic®[17] (benzocaine)	• Children under 12 years (Covonia®) • Children under 6 years (Ultra Chloraseptic®) • Pregnancy, breastfeeding	GSL/P

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Condition	Exceptions[1]	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/ GSL
4. Infrequent cold sores of the lips and face	Immuno-compromised patients Red flag symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor	Aciclovir cream 5%	• Pinewood Cold Sore Cream[18] • Virasorb®[19] • Zovirax®[20]	• Immunocompromised patients • Only for face and lips, not on mucous membranes • Not for the treatment of genital herpes or ocular herpes infections • Pregnancy (consider benefits vs. risks)	GSL
5. Conjunctivitis	Red flag symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor	Chloramphenicol 0.5% eye drops Chloramphenicol 1% eye ointment	• Brolene Antibiotic® 0.5% eye drops[21] • Chloramphenicol Antibiotic 0.5% eye drops[22] (generic) • Optrex® Infected eye drops[23] • Optrex® bacterial conjunctivitis 1% eye ointment[24]	• Children under two years • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Those with a known personal or family history of blood dyscrasias including aplastic anaemia • Patients with pre-existing bone-marrow depression or patients who have experienced myelosuppression during previous exposure to chloramphenicol	P

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
6. Coughs and colds and nasal congestion	Red flag symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor	Paracetamol 500mg tablets/soluble tablets/ effervescent tablets/ sachets/capsules Paracetamol 500mg/5ml adult oral solution/ suspension sugar free Paracetamol 120mg/5ml paediatric oral solution/ suspension (from three months) sugar free Paracetamol 250mg/5ml suspension (from 6 years old) with and without sugar Paracetamol suppositories (from three months)	• Anadin® paracetamol tablets[25] • Calpol® Six Plus Sugar Free Suspension[26] • Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension[27] • Panadol® Advance tablets[28] • Paracetamol 500mg tablets (generic)[29] • Alvedon® 60mg, 125mg or 250mg suppositories[30]	• Severe renal or severe hepatic impairment (medical advice needed) • Use with caution in patients with glutathione depletion due to metabolic deficiencies • Children under two months (Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension) • Babies born before 37 weeks (Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension) • Babies weighing less than 4kg (Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension) • Children under six years (Anadin paracetamol®, Calpol® Six Plus Sugar Free Suspension) • Children under ten years (Panadol Advance® tablets, Paracetamol 500mg tablets (generic)) • Fructose intolerance (Calpol® suspensions, soluble paracetamol tablets) • Sodium content of soluble/effervescent tablets and sachets	GSL/P depending on pack size and formulation
		Ibuprofen 200mg, 400mg capsules/tablets Ibuprofen 100mg/5ml oral suspension	• Anadin® Ibuprofen[31] • Calprofen®[32] • Cuprofen®[33] • Nurofen®[34]	• Children under three months and weighing less than 5kg (Calprofen®, Nurofen®, some brands may vary) • Children under 12 years (Anadin® Ibuprofen, Cuprofen®) • Severe renal or hepatic impairment • Class IV heart failure • Last trimester of pregnancy (use only if it is clearly necessary in the first and second trimesters) • Avoid use in chickenpox (varicella) • Stomach ulcer, perforation or bleeding (active or history of) • Fructose intolerance • Long-term indication • Previous hypersensitivity to aspirin or NSAIDs	GSL/P depending on pack size and formulation

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
6. Coughs and colds and nasal congestion continued	Red flag symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor	Pseudoephedrine hydrochloride or pseudoephedrine hydrochloride-containing preparations	• Benylin® Day & Night Tablets[35] (diphenhydramine hydrochloride/ paracetamol/ pseudoephedrine hydrochloride) • Non-Drowsy Sinutab®[36] (paracetamol/ pseudoephedrine hydrochloride) • Lemsip® Max Flu[37] (paracetamol/ pseudoephedrine hydrochloride) • Sudafed® Decongestant Tablets[38] (pseudoephedrine) • Sudafed® Decongestant Liquid[39] • Sudafed® Sinus Pressure & Pain Tablets[40]	• Children under 12 years (Benylin® Day & Night; Sudafed® Decongestant Tablets and liquid; Non-drowsy Sinutab®) or children under 16 years of age (Lemsip® Max Flu, Sudafed® Sinus Pressure & Pain Tablets) • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Avoid use in cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, hyperthyroidism, phaeochromocytoma, closed-angle glaucoma, severe renal impairment, concomitant sympathomimetic decongestants, beta-blockers or monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), or within 14 days of stopping MAOI treatment • Use with caution/avoid (depending on the brand) in patients with hyperexcitability, urination difficulty, prostatic enlargement, severe hepatic impairment, occlusive vascular disease, asthma. Other preparations may differ depending on the combination product	P

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
7. Cradle cap (seborrhoeic dermatitis – infants)	If causing distress to the infant and is not improving	Topical emollient and mild shampoo	• Capasal™ Therapeutic Shampoo[41] (salicylic acid/ coconut oil/coal tar) • Dentinox® Cradle Cap Treatment Shampoo[42] (sodium lauryl ether sulfo-succinate/sodium lauryl ether sulfate) • Loyon® Cradle Cap Treatment[43] (dicaprylyl carbonate/dimeticones)	• Not to be used on broken or infected skin (Dentinox® Shampoo)	GSL
8. Haemorrhoids	Red flag symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor	Astringent, lubricant, antiseptic, local anaesthetic, and/ or corticosteroid preparations	• Anodesyn® Ointment[44] (allantoin/lidocaine hydrochloride) • Anusol Cream®[45] (zinc oxide/bismuth oxide/ balsam peru) • Anusol Plus HC Ointment®[46] (balsam peru/ benzyl benzoate/bismuth oxide/bismuth subgallate/ hydrocortisone acetate/ zinc oxide) • Germoloids Ointment®[47] (zinc oxide/lidocaine hydrochloride)	• Not recommended for children (Anodesyn®, Anusol® preparations) • Children under 12 years (Germoloids®) • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Tubercular, fungal and most viral lesions including herpes simplex, vaccinia and varicella (Anusol Plus HC®) • Rectal bleeding or blood in stools	GSL/P

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
9. Infant colic (OTC treatments can be tried; there is limited evidence for the effectiveness of these treatments)[1]	Red flag symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor	Lactase	• Colief® Infant Drops[48]	• No restrictions	GSL
		Simeticone	• Infacol®[49] 40mg/ml	• No restrictions	GSL
		Activated dimeticone	• Dentinox® Infant Colic Drops[50] 42mg/5ml	• Fructose intolerance, glucose–galactose malabsorption, sucrase-isomaltase insufficiency or sucrose intolerant patients (contains sucrose)	GSL

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
10. Mild cystitis (Uncomplicated lower urinary tract infection in women)	Red flag symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor	Sodium citrate (lack of evidence to support use)[51]	• CanesOasis® Cystitis Relief granules®[52] • Boots Cystitis Relief[53]	• Men • Catheterisation • Visible haematuria • Children under 16 years • Diabetes • Heart disease, including hypertension, • Renal disease • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • On a low sodium diet • Intolerance to some sugars (contains sucrose)	GSL
		Potassium citrate (lack of evidence to support use)[51]	• Cystopurin®[54] • Effercitrate®[55] • Potassium Citrate Mixture (generic)[56]	• Men • Catheterisation • Visible haematuria • Pregnancy (adjunctive and secondary to anti-bacterial treatment; can be used at recommended doses for initial symptom relief), breastfeeding • Children under one year (Potassium Citrate Mixture) • Children under six years (Cystopurin®, Effercitrate®) • Addison's disease (Effercitrate®, Potassium Citrate Mixture) • Renal dysfunction • Hyperkalaemia (Effercitrate®, Potassium Citrate Mixture) • Ventricular arrythmias (Potassium Citrate Mixture; Effercitrate®) • Heart disease, including hypertension (Cystopurin®, Effercitrate®) • Acute dehydration (Effercitrate®)	GSL

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Minor illnesses suitable for self care

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Medication	For further advice see the product information leaflet.	
Common brands	Other brands may be available.	
OTC restrictions	For additional specific advice on restrictions, see the individual product information leaflet. These may vary between brands.	
P/GSL	P = Pharmacy only	GSL = General sales list

Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
11. Mild irritant dermatitis	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Emollients (not aqueous cream)[57] Crotamiton Steroid-containing preparations such as hydrocortisone	• Eurax® Cream[58] (crotamiton) • Eurax-Hc® Cream[59] (hydrocortisone/ crotamiton) • Hc45® Hydrocortisone Cream[60]	• Eurax® Cream is licensed for children over three years (medical supervision required for under 3s) • Eurax-Hc® and Hc45® are licensed for children over ten years (medical advice required for under 10s) • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Exudative, ulcerated, broken or inflamed skin • Buccal mucosa, face, scalp, in and around the eyes, and anogenital region • Untreated bacterial, viral, tuberculous or fungal infections (Eurax Hc®; Hc45®) • Aqueous cream is not recommended as an emollient, only as a soap substitute for skin washing[57]	GSL/P

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
12. Dandruff	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Ketoconazole shampoo	• Dandrazol® Anti-Dandruff shampoo[61] • Nizoral® Dandruff shampoo[62]	• Children under 12 years	GSL/P
		Coal tar shampoo/ ointment	• Capasal® Therapeutic Shampoo[63] (salicylic acid/ coconut oil/coal tar) • Cocois® (Coconut Oil Compound Ointment)[64] (salicylic acid/coal tar/ precipitated sulfur) • Polytar® scalp shampoo[65] (coal tar)	• Pregnancy, breastfeeding (Cocois®, Polytar®) • Children under 12 years (Cocois®, Polytar®) • Infected open skin lesions or acute pustular psoriasis, inflamed or broken skin (Cocois®, Polytar®)	GSL/P
		Selenium sulfide shampoo	• Selsun® Shampoo[66]	• Pregnancy • Children under 5 years • Damaged or inflamed skin on the scalp	P

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
13. Diarrhoea (Adults only)	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1 This recommendation does not apply to children	Oral rehydration solutions/sachets	• Boots Rehydration Treatment®[67] • Dioralyte® Relief Sachets[68]	• Liver or renal disease • Low potassium/sodium diets • Phenylketonuria • Intestinal obstruction • Children under one year (medical advice needed) • Pregnancy/breastfeeding (medical advice needed)	GSL/P
		Loperamide 2mg capsules	• Boots Diarrhoea Relief[69] • Imodium®[70] • Loperamide (generic)[71]	• Children under 12 years of age • Pregnancy/breastfeeding • Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) that has not been diagnosed by a doctor • Blood in stools and high fever (acute dysentery) • When inhibition of peristalsis is to be avoided • Acute ulcerative colitis • Bacterial enterocolitis • Pseudmembranous colitis • Galactose intolerance, the Lapp lactase deficiency or glucose-galactose malabsorption	GSL/P depending on pack size

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
14. Dry eyes/ sore tired eyes	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1 Pre-existing eye conditions	Hypromellose 0.3%	• Artelac® eye drops[72] • Hypromellose (generic) eye drops[73]	• Pregnancy, breastfeeding with carbomer (check individual brands) • Use with soft contact lenses (check individual brands)	GSL/P
		Carbomer	• Gel Tears®[74] • Liquivisc®[75] • Viscotears® Liquid Gel[76]		
		Yellow Soft Paraffin/Anhydrous Lanolin/Liquid Paraffin	• Simple Eye Ointment[77]		
		Sodium hyaluronate	• Boots Eye Drops for Dry and Irritated Eyes[78] • Optrex® Intensive Eye Drops[79]		
		Distilled witch hazel	• Optrex® Sore Eyes Drops[80]		
15. Ear wax	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1 Perforated ear drum	Olive oil drops Docusate sodium 0.5% drops Urea hydrogen peroxide 5% Acetic acid 2% (not licensed for wax removal, may help if ears itch after wax removal; however, significant itching may indicate infection and this should be confirmed and treated by the GP)	• EarCalm® Spray[81] • Otex® Ear Drops[82] • Waxsol® Ear Drops[83]	• Children under 12 years (EarCalm®) • Ear drum damaged, ear disorder or history of ear problems (Otex®) • Perforation of the ear drum (EarCalm®; Waxsol®) • Inflammation of the ear (EarCalm®; Waxsol®)	GSL (olive oil) P (all other ear drops/ sprays)

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
16. Excessive sweating (Hyperhidrosis)	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Aluminium chloride	• Anhydrol Forte®[84] • Driclor®[85]	• Broken or irritated skin • External use only	P
17. Head lice	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1 OTC chemical treatment (as opposed to wet combing) is only recommended in exceptional circumstances	Dimeticone Oxyphthirine Cylcomethicone, isopropyl myristate	• Hedrin®[86] • Lyclear® Sensitive Treatment Lotion[87] • Lyclear® Crème Rinse[87] • Full Marks®[88]	• Children under six months • Pregnancy, breastfeeding (Derbac-M®) • Avoid use on broken or infected skin (Derbac-M®)	GSL/P
		Malathion	• Derbac-M®[89]		GSL
		Isopropyl myristate, isopropyl alcohol	• Vamousse®[90]	• Children under two years • Pregnancy, breastfeeding (medical advice needed)	GSL
		Conditioner Headlice combs for wet combing	• Various	• No restrictions	GSL

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
18. Indigestion and heartburn	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Sodium bicarbonate, calcium carbonate, magnesium carbonate	• Bisodol® Original Indigestion Relief Tablets[91]	• Children under 12 years • Cardiac or renal issues • Hypophosphataemia	GSL
		Sodium alginate, potassium hydrogen carbonate Sodium alginate, potassium hydrogen carbonate	• Acidex®[92] • Gaviscon® Advance[93]	• Children under 12 years • Highly restricted sodium or potassium diet • Hypercalcaemia, nephrocalcinosis and recurrent calcium containing renal calculi	GSL/P
		Sodium alginate Magnesium alginate	• Gaviscon Infant®[94]	• Children over two years • Premature infants or infants under one year except under medical supervision • Renal impairment • Intestinal obstruction • Excessive water loss likely, e.g. diarrhoea, vomiting, gastroenteritis	P
		Omeprazole	• Pyrocalm Control®[95] • Boots Pharmaceuticals Acid Reflux Tablets[95]	• Children under 18 years of age • Treatment for more than 14 days (omeprazole, esomeprazole) • Patients on continuous symptomatic treatment of indigestion or heartburn for four or more weeks • Patients with rare hereditary problems of galactose intolerance, total lactase deficiency or glucose-galactose malabsorption (omeprazole, esomeprazole) • Jaundice or liver disease • Aged over 55 years with new or recently changed symptoms • Previous gastric ulcer or gastrointestinal surgery • Pregnancy (esomeprazole, pantoprazole) • Breast feeding (esomeprazole, pantoprazole)	GSL
		Esomeprazole	• Nexium Control®[96] • Guardium®[97]		GSL
		Pantoprazole	• Pantoloc Control®[98]		P

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
19. Infrequent constipation	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Lactulose	• Lactulose (generic)[99] • Duphalac®[100]	• Galactosaemia • Acute inflammatory bowel disease, gastrointestinal obstruction or subocclusive syndromes, digestive perforation or risk of digestive perforation, painful abdominal syndromes of undetermined cause	P
		Bisacodyl tablets 5mg	• Bisalax®[101] • Dulcolax®[102] • Sovolax®[103]	• Patients with ileus, intestinal obstruction, acute abdominal conditions including appendicitis, acute inflammatory bowel diseases, and severe abdominal pain associated with nausea and vomiting which may be indicative of the aforementioned severe conditions • Galactose intolerance, the Lapp lactase deficiency or glucose-galactose malabsorption, fructose intolerance or sucrase-isomaltase insufficiency • Severe dehydration • Pregnancy and breastfeeding (medical advice needed) • Children under 18 years	GSL/P depending on pack size
		Senna	• Senokot® Max Strength 12 years plus[104] • Senokot® 12 years plus[105]	• Severe dehydration with water and electrolyte depletion • Children under 12 years • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Intestinal obstructions and stenosis, atony, appendicitis, inflammatory bowel diseases, abdominal pain of unknown origin • Treatment for more than seven days • Galactose intolerance, the Lapp lactase deficiency or glucose-galactose malabsorption	GSL/P

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
19. Infrequent constipation continued	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Ispaghula Husk Granules	• Fybogel®[106] • Ispagel®[107]	• Children under six years (Fybogel®) • Children under 12 years (Ispagel®) • Diabetes and concomitant use of thyroid hormones (medical advice needed) • Patients with a sudden change in bowel habit that has persisted more than two weeks • Undiagnosed rectal bleeding and failure to defecate following the use of a laxative • Patients suffering from abnormal constrictions in the gastro-intestinal tract, with diseases of the oesophagus and cardia, intestinal obstruction, faecal impaction, natural or drug-induced reduction of gut motility and colonic atony such as senile mega-colon • Patients who have difficulty in swallowing or any throat problems • Phenylketonuria (Fybogel®, Ispagel® contain aspartame) • Treatment for more than three days without bowel movement	GSL

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
20. Infrequent migraine	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Prochlorperazine maleate	• Buccastem® M Buccal Tablets 3mg[108]	• Impaired liver function • Existing blood dyscrasias • Epilepsy • Parkinson's Disease • Protastic hypertrophy • Narrow angle glaucoma • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Children under 18 years • Medical advice needed if there is a personal or family history of blood clots, risk factors for a blood clot or stroke (high blood pressure, high cholesterol level, diabetes, smoking) • Maximum of two days treatment	P
		Paracetamol tablets/ soluble tablets/ effervescent tablets/ sachets/capsules Paracetamol 500mg/5ml adult oral solution/ suspension sugar free	• Anadin® paracetamol[109] • Paracetamol 500mg soluble tablets[110] • Panadol® Advance tablets[28] • Paracetamol 500mg tablets (generic)[29]	• Long term conditions requiring regular pain relief • Children under six years (Anadin® paracetamol) • Children under ten years (Panadol® Advance tablets, Paracetamol 500mg tablets (generic)) • Severe renal or severe hepatic impairment (medical advice needed) • Fructose intolerance (Paracetamol soluble tablets) • Use with caution if on a low sodium diet due to high sodium content of soluble/effervescent tablets and sachets	GSL/P depending on pack size

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
20. Infrequent migraine continued	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Ibuprofen 200mg, 400mg capsules/ tablets Ibuprofen 100mg/5ml liquid/ suspension sugar free	• Anadin® Ibuprofen[31] • Calprofen®[32] • Cuprofen®[33] • Nurofen®[34]	• Long term indication • Stomach ulcer, perforation or bleeding (active or history of) • Children under three months (Calprofen®, Nurofen®) • Children under 12 years (Anadin® Ibuprofen, Cuprofen®) • Severe renal or hepatic impairment • Class IV heart failure • Last trimester of pregnancy (use only if it is clearly necessary in the first and second trimesters) • Avoid use in chickenpox (varicella)	GSL/P depending on pack size
		Co-codamol 8/500mg tablets/ capsules/ effervescent tablets	• Migraleve® Yellow tablets[111] • Paracodol®[112]	• Children under 12 years • Severe kidney and liver disease (medical advice needed) • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Treatment length limited to three days • Head injury; in conditions in which intracranial pressure is increased; acute respiratory depression; obstructive bowel disorders and in patients at risk of paralytic ileus • CYP2D6 ultra-rapid metabolisers	P (up to 32 tablets)

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
20. Infrequent migraine continued	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Sumatriptan	• Boots Migraine Relief Tablets[113] • Migraitan®[114] • Sumibril®[114]	• Children under 18 years • Patients over 65 years • Patients who have had a myocardial infarction or have ischaemic heart disease, coronary vasospasm (Prinzmetal's angina), peripheral vascular disease or patients who have symptoms or signs consistent with ischaemic heart disease • Patients with a history of cerebrovascular accident (stroke) or transient ischaemic attack (TIA) • Severe hepatic impairment • Moderate and severe hypertension and mild uncontrolled hypertension • Galactose intolerance, total lactase deficiency or glucose-galactose malabsorption (Migraitan/Sumibril) • Pregnancy/breastfeeding (medical advice needed)	P
21. Insect bites and stings	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Mepyramine maleate 2%	• Anthisan® cream 2%[115]	• Eczematous conditions or on extensively broken skin surfaces • Pregnancy, breastfeeding (medical advice needed) • Seek medical advice if no better, or worse, after three days	GSL
		Lidocaine hydrochloride/zinc sulphate/cetrimide	• Savlon® Bites & Stings Pain Relief Gel[116]	• Children under 12 years • Not suitable for animal bites • Broken or infected skin	GSL
		Calamine/zinc oxide[119]	• Calamine lotion[117]	• Broken or infected skin	GSL
		Antihistamine (such as chlorphenamine – licensed for insect bites)	• Piriton® syrup[118] • Boots Allergy Relief 4mg tablets[119]	• Children under six years – tablets, children under one year - solution • Pregnancy, breastfeeding (medical advice needed) • Kidney or liver impairment (medical advice needed) • Patients who have taken a MAOI within the past 14 days • Fructose intolerance, glucose-galactose malabsorption or sucrose-isomaltase insufficiency	P

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
22. Mild acne	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Benzoyl peroxide containing preparations	• Acnecide®[120] • Quinoderm® cream[121]	• Pregnancy (only use if clearly needed), breastfeeding (caution) • Damaged skin • Acne rosacea (Quinoderm®) • Avoid use of sunlamps, prolonged exposure to sunlight	P
23. Mild dry skin	See general exceptions on page 1	Emollients (not aqueous cream), creams and ointments	• Cetraben®[122] • Dermol®[123] • Emulsiderm®[124] • Oilatum®[125]	• Aqueous cream is not recommended as an emollient, only as a soap substitute for skin washing.	GSL/P
24. Sunburn due to excessive sun exposure	See general exceptions on page 1	After sun products	• Various including calamine lotion[117]	• Broken or infected skin	GSL
25. Sun protection	ACBS approved indication of photo-dermatoses (i.e. where skin protection should be prescribed) See general exceptions on page 1	Sun protection cream/sprays/gels	• Various	• No restrictions	GSL

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
26. Mild to moderate hay fever/allergic rhinitis	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Chlorphenamine 2mg/5ml solution Chlorphenamine 4mg tablets	• Piriton® syrup[118] • Boots Allergy Relief 4mg tablets[119]	• Children under six years – tablets, children under one year - solution • Pregnancy, breastfeeding (medical advice needed) • Kidney or liver impairment (medical advice needed) • Patients who have taken a MAOI within the past 14 days • Fructose intolerance, glucose-galactose malabsorption or sucrose-isomaltase insufficiency	P
		Loratadine 10mg tablets Loratadine 5mg/5ml syrup	• Clarityn® Allergy[126] • Loratadine (generic)[127]	• Children under six years with a body weight of more than 30 kg - tablets, children under 2 years – syrup • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Galactose intolerance, the Lapp lactase deficiency or glucose-galactose malabsorption • Severe liver impairment – use with caution	GSL/P depending on pack sizes
		Acrivastine 8mg capsule	• Benadryl® Allergy Relief[128] • Acrivastine (generic)[129]	• Children under 12 years • Adults over 65 years • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Severe renal impairment • Galactose intolerance, the Lapp lactase deficiency or glucose-galactose malabsorption	GSL/P depending on pack sizes
		Fexofenadine 120mg tablets	• Allevia® 120mg tablets[130]	• Children under 12 years • Should only be used on the advice of a doctor in the elderly, renally or hepatically impaired patients, and those with a history of or ongoing cardiovascular disease	GSL

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
26. Mild to moderate hay fever/ allergic rhinitis continued	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Cetirizine 10mg tablets Cetirizine 1mg/ml oral solution	• Cetirizine (generic)[131] • Piriteze® Allergy[132] • Zirtek® Allergy Relief[133]	• Children under six years - tablets, children under twp years – solution • Severe renal impairment: less than 10ml/min creatinine clearance (eGFR less than 10ml/ minute/1.73m^2) – solution, GFR below 15ml/min - tablet • Pregnancy, breastfeeding – use with caution	GSL/P depending on pack sizes
		Beclomethasone 0.05% nasal spray	• Beconase® Hayfever[134] • Boots Hayfever Relief[135]	• Children under 18 years • Pregnancy, breastfeeding (medical advice needed) • Caution with renal impairment, history of glaucoma, nose infection, sinus trouble, recent surgery or injury to nose, ulcers in nose, using or recently used other corticosteroid medicines	GSL/P depending on pack sizes
		Sodium cromoglicate 2% eye drops	• Allercrom®[136] • Allergy Relief[137] • Aspire Hayfever Relief[137] • Catacrom® preservative free single dose[138] • Librachrom®[139] • Opticrom®[137] • Optrex® Hayfever Relief[137] • Sodium cromoglicate (generic)[140]	• Some brands are not licensed for children under 6 years (Allercrom®) • Continuous treatment for more than 14 days (Allercrom®) • Pregnancy, breastfeeding – use with caution • Dry eye syndrome • Do not use with soft contact lenses, remove other types of contact lenses before instilling drops	GSL/P depending on brand

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
27. Minor burns and scalds	See general exceptions on page 1 No routine exceptions have been identified However, more serious burns always require professional medical attention Burns requiring hospital A&E treatment include but are not limited to: • All chemical and electrical burns • Large or deep burns • Burns that cause white or charred skin • Burns on the face, hands, • Arms, feet, legs, or genitals that cause blisters	Antiseptic burn cream Cooling burn gel	• Acriflex® 0.25% w/w Cream[141] • Germolene® Antiseptic Cream[142] • Savlon® Antiseptic Cream[143] • Sudocrem® Antiseptic Healing Cream[144]	• External use only	GSL

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
28. Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and fever, e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Paracetamol 500mg tablets/soluble tablets/effervescent tablets/sachets/ capsules Paracetamol 500mg/5ml adult oral solution/suspension sugar free Paracetamol 120mg/5ml paediatric oral solution/ suspension (from 3 months) sugar free Paracetamol 250mg/5ml suspension (from six years old) with and without sugar Paracetamol suppositories (from three months)	• Anadin® paracetamol tablets[25] • Calpol® Six Plus Sugar Free Suspension[26] • Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension[27] • Panadol® Advance tablets[28] • Paracetamol 500mg tablets (generic)[29] • Alvedon® 60mg, 125mg or 250mg suppositories[30]	• Long term conditions requiring regular pain relief • Children under two months (Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension) • Babies born before 37 weeks (Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension) • Babies weighing less than 4kg (Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension) • Children under six years (Anadin® paracetamol, Calpol® Six Plus Sugar Free Suspension) • Children under ten years (Panadol® Advance tablets, Paracetamol 500mg tablets (generic)) • Severe renal or severe hepatic impairment (medical advice needed) • Use with caution in patients with glutathione depletion due to metabolic deficiencies • Fructose intolerance (Calpol® suspensions, soluble paracetamol tablets) • Use with caution if on a low sodium diet due to high sodium content of soluble/effervescent tablets and sachets	GSL/P depending on pack size

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
28. Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and fever, e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain continued	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Ibuprofen 200mg, 400mg capsules/ tablets Ibuprofen 100mg/5ml oral suspension	• Anadin® Ibuprofen[31] • Calprofen®[32] • Cuprofen®[33] • Nurofen®[34]	• Long-term indication • Stomach ulcer, perforation or bleeding (active or history of bleeding) • Children under three months and weighing less than 5kg (Calprofen®, Nurofen®, some brands may vary) • Children under 12 years (Anadin® Ibuprofen, Cuprofen®) • Severe renal or hepatic impairment • Class IV heart failure • Last trimester of pregnancy (use only if it is clearly necessary in the first and second trimesters) • Avoid use in chickenpox (varicella) • Fructose intolerance	GSL/P depending on pack size
		Co-codamol 8/500mg tablets, capsules, effervescent tablets	• Migraleve® Yellow tablets[111] • Paracodol®[112]	• Children under 12 years • Severe kidney and liver disease (medical advice needed) • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Treatment length limited to three days • Head injury; in conditions in which intracranial pressure is increased; acute respiratory depression; obstructive bowel disorders and in patients at risk of paralytic ileus • CYP2D6 ultra-rapid metabolisers	P (up to 32 tablets)

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
28. Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and fever, e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain continued	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Topical ibuprofen gel (5% and 10%)	• Ibuprofen 5% gel (generic)[145]	• Children under 12 years • Pregnancy, breastfeeding • Broken/infected/inflamed skin • Eczema • Patients with asthma, rhinitis or urticaria • Hypersensitivity to aspirin, or other NSAIDs • Caution with history of/current stomach or duodenal ulcer; history of kidney problems (medical advice needed) • Excessive exposure to sunlight • Review treatment after two weeks	GSL/P depending on indication
		Topical diclofenac diethylamine gel (1.16% and 2.32%)	• Motusol® Max 2.32% w/w gel[146] • Voltarol® Joint and Back Pain Relief Gel[147]	• Children under 14 years • Last trimester of pregnancy (only use in 1st and 2nd trimesters if clearly necessary), breastfeeding – medical advice needed • Hypersensitivity to aspirin, or other NSAIDs • Eczema, broken/inflamed/infected skin, use on mucous membranes • Caution with history of/current stomach or duodenal ulcer, reduced kidney, liver or heart function • Excessive exposure to sunlight • Treatment length greater than one week • If symptoms worsen or do not improve after three to five days, consult a doctor	GSL

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
29. Mouth ulcers	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Choline salicylate/ cetalkonium chloride Lidocaine hydrochloride/ chlorocresol/ cetylpyridinium chloride Benzocaine	• Bonjela®[148] • Anbesol®[149] • Orajel®[150]	• Children under 12 years (Anbesol®, Orajel®), under 16 years (Bonjela®) • Active peptic ulceration (Bonjela®) • Pregnancy (Bonjela®, Anbesol®) • Hypersensitivity to aspirin, or other NSAIDs (Bonjela®) • Porphyria (Anbesol®) • Individual with, or family history of, methaemoglobinaemia (Orajel®)	GSL
30. Nappy rash	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Titanium dioxide/ titanium peroxide/ titanium salicylate	• Metanium® Nappy Rash ointment[151]	• External use only	GSL
		Zinc oxide/benzyl alcohol/benzyl benzoate/lanolin	• Sudocrem® Antiseptic Healing Cream[144]	• External use only	GSL
31. Oral thrush	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Miconazole 2% oral gel 15g	• Daktarin® Oral Gel[152]	• Children under four months or whose swallowing reflex is not yet sufficiently developed • Caution in infants who are pre-term or have slow neuromuscular development, do not use for first five to six months of life • Pregnancy – avoid use if possible, breastfeeding – caution advised • Liver dysfunction • Coadministration of drugs metabolised by CYP3A4 e.g. astemizole, cisapride, dofetilide, mizolastine, pimozide, quinidine, sertindole, terfenadine, ergot alkaloids, HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors, triazolam, oral midazolam	P

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
32. Prevention of dental caries (dental decay)	No routine exceptions have been identified Prescription only medicines need to be re-directed to the dentist to prescribe See general exceptions on page 1	Mouthwashes, sprays and gels containing active ingredients such as chlorhexidine Fluoride	• Corsodyl® mouthwash[153] • Corsodyl® gel[154] • Fluoride toothpaste (various)	• Children under 12 years (chlorhexidine products)	GSL/P
33. Ringworm/ Athletes foot	Lymphoedema or history of lower limb cellulitis See general exceptions on page 1	Miconazole 2% cream Miconazole powder 2% Miconazole 0.16% spray powder	• Daktarin®[155] • Daktarin® Powder[156] • Daktarin® Aktiv[157]	• Pregnancy and breastfeeding – use with caution • For external use only	P (cream, powder) GSL (Daktarin Aktiv spray powder)
		Ketoconazole 2% cream	• Daktarin® Intensiv Cream[158] • Daktarin® Gold 2% Cream[159]	• Children under 18 years • For external use only	GSL P
		Terbinafine hydrochloride 1%	• Lamisil® AT[160] • Boots Athlete's Foot Cream[161]	• Children under 16 years • For external use only, do not use on face • Pregnancy, breastfeeding	GSL

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
34. Teething/ mild toothache	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Paracetamol 500mg tablets/soluble tablets/effervescent tablets/sachets/ capsules Paracetamol 500mg/5ml adult oral solution/ suspension sugar free Paracetamol 120mg/5ml suspension (from three months) sugar free Paracetamol 250mg/5ml suspension (from six years old) sugar free Paracetamol suppositories (from three months)	• Anadin® paracetamol tablets[25] • Calpol® Six Plus Sugar Free Suspension[26] • Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension[27] • Panadol® Advance tablets[28] • Paracetamol 500mg tablets (generic)[29] • Alvedon® 60mg, 125mg or 250mg suppositories[30]	• Long term conditions requiring regular pain relief • Use with caution in patients with glutathione depletion due to metabolic deficiencies • Children under two months (Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension) • Babies born before 37 weeks (Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension) • Babies weighing less than 4kg (Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension) • Severe renal or severe hepatic impairment (medical advice needed) • Children under 10 years (Panadol® Advance tablets, Paracetamol 500mg tablets (generic)) • Fructose intolerance (Calpol® suspensions, soluble paracetamol tablets) • Sodium content of soluble/effervescent tablets and sachets	GSL/P depending on pack size

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
34. Teething/ mild toothache continued	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Ibuprofen 200mg, 400mg capsules/ tablets Ibuprofen 100mg/5ml oral suspension	• Anadin® Ibuprofen[31] • Calprofen®[32] • Cuprofen®[33] • Nurofen®[34]	• Long-term indication • Stomach ulcer, perforation or bleeding (active or history of) • Children under two months and weighing less than 5kg (Calprofen®, Nurofen®, some brands may vary) • Children under 12 years (Anadin® Ibuprofen, Cuprofen®) • Severe renal or hepatic impairment • Class IV heart failure • Last trimester of pregnancy (use only if it is clearly necessary in the first and second trimesters) • Avoid use in chickenpox (varicella) • Fructose intolerance	GSL/P depending on pack size
		Teething gel	• Bonjela® Soothing Teething Gel[162] • Dentinox® Teething Gel[163]	• Babies under six months (Bonjela® Soothing Teething Gel) • Babies under five months (Dentinox®) • Fructose intolerance (Dentinox®) • Treatment needed for more than seven days (Dentinox®)	GSL/P
35. Thread-worms	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Mebendazole 100mg tablets	• Boots Threadworm Tablets 2 years Plus[164] • Ovex®[165]	• Children under two years • Pregnancy – do not use, breastfeeding – caution needed	P

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
36. Travel sickness	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Cinnarizine tablets 15mg	• Cinnarizine (generic)[166] • Stugeron™ 15[167]	• Parkinson's disease – only use if the advantages outweigh possible risk of disease aggravation • Fructose or galactose intolerance, Lapp lactase deficiency, glucose-galactose malabsorption or sucrase- isomaltase insufficiency, • Porphyria – avoid use • Children under five years • Pregnancy and breastfeeding – use not recommended	P
		Hyoscine hydrobromide tablets 150mcg	• Joy-Rides® Tablets Chewable 150mcg[168] • Kwells® 300mcg tablets[169] • Kwells® Kids 150mcg Tablets[170]	• Children under three years (Joyrides®) under four years (Kwells® Kids) • Epilepsy – use with caution, increased seizure frequency possible • Glaucoma • Pregnancy – avoid use in first trimester, breastfeeding – caution advised • Paralytic ileus, pyloric stenosis, prostatic enlargement • Myasthenia gravis	P

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Condition	Exceptions	Medication	Common brands	OTC restrictions (not exhaustive)	P/GSL
37. Warts and verrucae	No routine exceptions have been identified See general exceptions on page 1	Wart and verruca gel such as those containing salicylic acid and lactic acid	• Bazuka® Extra strength gel[171] • Bazuka® Gel[172] • Bazuka® Treatment Gel[173] • Bazuka® Extra Strength Treatment Gel[174]	• Diabetes patients • Face, neck, ano-genital area • Moles, birthmarks, hairy warts or skin lesions • Inflamed or broken skin • Impaired peripheral blood circulation • Children under two years (Bazuka® Treatment Gel, Bazula® Extra Strength Treatment Gel)	P GSL (Bazuka® treatment gel)
			• Salactol® Collodion[175] • Occlusal®[176] • Salatac®[177]	• Diabetes patients • Face, neck, ano-genital area • Moles, birthmarks, hairy warts or skin lesions • Inflamed or broken skin • Impaired peripheral blood circulation	P
		Wart freeze treatments containing liquid freezing agents such as dimethyl ether, propane and isobutane	• Scholl® Verruca and Wart Remover Freeze Treatment[178] • Bazuka® Sub-Zero[179]	• Children under four years • Diabetes patients • Face, armpits, breasts, ano-genital area • Moles, birthmarks, hairy warts or skin lesions • Inflamed or broken skin • Impaired peripheral blood circulation	GSL

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Additional PrescQIPP resources

Additional OTC items resources	https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-320-over-the-counter-items

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