NHS
Suffolk and North East Essex
Integrated Care Board

Self-Care Topical Medicated Preparations Guidance

A range of topical medicated preparations are available to purchase over the counter for minor conditions suitable for self-care. In alignment with national recommendations the Suffolk and North East Essex (SNEE) Integrated Care Board (ICB) does not support the prescribing for the treatment of self-limiting conditions and/or minor illnesses suitable for self-care. Please also see 'OtC and Self Care' in position statements for guidance on general exceptions. https://suffolkandnortheastessex.icb.nhs.uk/health-and-care-professionals-area/medicines-management/clinical-guidelines-and-position-statement/

Local community pharmacy teams have qualified healthcare professionals with the knowledge and skills to help with many health concerns. Pharmacists can give clinical advice and help your patient choose the most appropriate treatment. Some topical medicated preparations are available for purchase from shops and supermarkets but there will be no additional advice if not purchased from a pharmacy.

Patients are likely to be presenting to the practice to request these as an acute prescription and a bulk switch of repeat items is not recommended. If patients are in receipt of these items on repeat prescription, then items should be reviewed.

The following table details the topical preparations available, suitable conditions to recommend purchasing over the counter and the circumstances where buying over the counter may not be suitable or product licensing may not allow.

Topical preparation	Legal Classification	Indication	Restrictions to over-the-counter sales may apply as follows:	Pack size
Hydrocortisone 1% cream HC45 **Hydrocortisone 0.1% cream** Dermacort 0.1% cream **Crotamiton 10% and Hydrocortisone 0.25% cream** Eurax HC cream	P	Mild irritant dermatitis	• under 10 years old • application to buccal mucosa, face, scalp, in and around the eyes, and anogenital region • pregnancy and breastfeeding • untreated bacterial, viral or fungal infection	20g
Clobetasone 0.05% cream Eumovate Eczema and Dermatitis 0.05% cream	P	Mild irritant dermatitis	• under 12 years old • application to buccal mucosa, face, scalp, in and around the eyes, and anogenital region • pregnancy and breastfeeding • untreated bacterial, viral or fungal infection	15g
Clotrimazole 1% cream Canesten 1% cream	GSL	Athletes foot, jock itch (itchy rash in moist areas of the body)	• nail infections • scalp infections	20g
Bifonazole 1% cream Canesten Bifonazole 1% athletes foot cream	GSL	Athletes foot	• nappy rash • nail infections • scalp infections • vaginal infections.	20g
Miconazole 2% cream Daktarin cream	GSL	Athletes foot, ringworm	• diabetic • pregnancy & breastfeeding	15g

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Terbinafine 1% cream Lamisil AT cream	GSL	Athletes foot, ringworm	• under 16 years • diabetic • pregnancy & breastfeeding	15g
Clotrimazole 2% cream Canesten thrush external cream	P	Vaginal thrush, candidiasis. For external use only, recommended to use an internal product to treat the cause of the infection.	• under 16 or over 60 years old • more than 2 infections of thrush in the last 6 months • irregular vaginal bleeding • abnormal vaginal bleeding or a blood-stained discharge • ulcers, blisters or sores of the vagina or vulva • lower abdominal pain • pain or difficulty in passing urine • fever or chills, feeling sick or vomiting, diarrhoea • a foul-smelling discharge from the vagina.	20g
Hydrocortisone 1% and Clotrimazole 1% cream Canesten hydrocortisone athletes foot cream	P	Intertrigo, Athletes foot, Ringworm. Maximum treatment period 7 days and not recommended for large areas of skin.	• under 10 years old • application to buccal mucosa, face, scalp, in and around the eyes, and anogenital region • pregnancy and breastfeeding • untreated bacterial, viral or fungal infection.	15g
Hydrocortisone 1% and Miconazole 2% cream Daktacort cream	P	Inflamed sweat rash, Athletes foot.	• under 10 years • not for use on face, eyes, mucous membranes or anogenital region • do not use on broken skin or other skin problems such as cold sores, herpes, chicken pox or shingles.	15g

Key:
GSL – General Sales List, can be purchased from a pharmacy, shops, supermarkets and online.
P – Pharmacy medicines, must be purchased from a pharmacy under the supervision of a pharmacist.
Pharmacy – can include online or distance selling pharmacies.

References:
NHS England » Policy guidance: conditions for which over the counter items should not be routinely prescribed in primary care. Last accessed 4th August 2025
How to use topical steroids
320-over-the-counter-items-2-0.pdf

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