

What is changing?

From 1 September 2018, a range of medicines that are available to buy over the counter from pharmacies and supermarkets will no longer be routinely prescribed by GP surgeries.

These are medicines associated with a number of minor, short term health conditions, which either get better by themselves or you can easily treat yourself.

The change applies to medicines for a total of 37 conditions.

This includes, for example, medicines for coughs, colds, infrequent cold sores of the lip, mild to moderate hayfever, mild cystitis, nappy rash, warts and verrucas, earwax and head lice.

It also applies to a range of vitamins and minerals, unless from medical tests it is clear that the person does not have sufficient natural levels.

For the full list, please see: www.eastberkshireccg.nhs.uk/about-us/medicines-prescribing-information/over-the-counter/

Why are we making this change?

The decision in East Berkshire follows a national consultation and NHS England guidance which recommends this change.

As a commissioner (buyer) of services and treatments, we have a duty to plan and prioritise fairly and use the public money available to achieve the maximum health benefit for the people of East Berkshire.

The annual prescribing cost for these medicines in East Berkshire is around £3.7 million which we think could be put to better use to support more serious health conditions.

Costs to the NHS are often higher than those over the counter when other fees are included such as those for dispensing or medical consultations.

The change will also help to ease some of the pressure on appointments at GP surgeries so doctors and other healthcare professionals can concentrate on patients with more serious or long term conditions.

Will there be any exceptions?

There are exceptions to the change, which include:

- People prescribed an over the counter medication for a complex medical condition rather than the conditions listed in this leaflet
- Where a clinician considers that medical, mental health or social vulnerability mean that an individual will come to harm without the medication being prescribed

A full list of exceptions to the change can be found here: www.eastberkshireccg.nhs.uk/about-us/medicines-prescribing-information/over-the-counter/

Will I notice a change?

For the vast majority of people, the decision will not result in any change, but for some patients, who are currently able to get these medicines on NHS prescription from their GP surgery, they will no longer be able to do so. Instead they will need to buy the medicines themselves.

How much do these medicines cost?

The average cost of many of these medicines will be around £2 to £3 – for example olive oil ear drops, antifungal skin cream or antihistamine tablets.

The price of these items may vary slightly, but will range from around 35p (for a small pack of paracetamol) to around £5 (for a bottle of branded cough medicine).

Patients are encouraged to discuss the range of medicines available to them with pharmacy staff.

Where can I get further advice?

Community pharmacies will continue to play a key role in advising you on minor ailments that can be treated yourself. They are experts on medicines and can signpost to other services if needed. Many pharmacies have extended opening hours, including weekends.

Information on your nearest community pharmacy is available from www.nhs.uk

Your GP, nurse or pharmacist will not generally give you a prescription for certain medicines that are available to buy in a pharmacy or supermarket, even if you qualify for free prescriptions.

This applies to treatments for these conditions:

- Acute sore throat
- Conjunctivitis
- Coughs, colds and nasal congestion
- Cradle cap
- Dandruff
- Diarrhoea (adults)
- Dry eyes / sore tired eyes
- Earwax
- Excessive sweating
- Haemorrhoids
- Head lice
- Indigestion and heartburn
- Infant colic
- Infrequent cold sores of the lip
- Infrequent constipation
- Infrequent migraine
- Insect bites and stings
- Mild acne
- Minor burns and scalds
- Mild cystitis
- Mild dry skin
- Mild irritant dermatitis
- Mild to moderate hay fever
- Minor pain, discomfort and fever (e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain)
- Mouth ulcers
- Nappy rash
- Oral thrush
- Prevention of tooth decay
- Ringworm / athlete's foot
- Sunburn
- Sun protection
- Teething / mild toothache
- Threadworms
- Travel sickness
- Warts and verrucae

For more information and support

You can find out more information about this change to prescription policy at: www.eastberkshireccg.nhs.uk/about-us/medicines-prescribing-information/over-the-counter/

Your local pharmacy team are qualified healthcare professionals with the knowledge and skills to help with many health concerns. Pharmacists can give clinical advice, right there and then, and help you choose the most appropriate treatment. If your symptoms suggest it's more serious, they'll ensure you get the care you need.

The NHS Website www.nhs.uk also has a lot of information about choosing the right service for you and on how to treat minor illnesses.

Prescribing of over the counter medicines is changing



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