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To all GPs, prescribers and practice managers

Prescribing of medicines available over the counter (OTC): new guidance for GPs

Dear colleague,

Thank you for engaging with NW London CCGs' Prescribing Wisely programme to reduce prescribing of medicines available over the counter (OTC). Expenditure on these medicines is now £100,000 per month less than when the programme started.

Moving forward, it is appropriate to refine our approach by implementing NHS England's national guidance for [conditions for which OTC items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care](#). **We are now asking all practices and GPs to follow the national guidance.**

What is different?

1. The guidance applies to minor and self-limiting *conditions* not *products*.
2. You no longer have to ask patients if they are willing to buy the product.
3. NHS England's Medical Director has written: 'Contractors are therefore required to have regard to this guidance and are able to follow the guidance and exercise judgement about when it is (and is not) appropriate to prescribe OTC items, without any risk that they will be in breach of their contract.' The full letter can be viewed [here](#).

What can practices do to implement the guidance?

- All practices will receive a stock of printed national leaflets and posters.
- Please ensure that a supply of these leaflets is available on every prescriber's desk and that the supply is regularly topped up.
- Please display the posters in waiting and consultation rooms.
- Update your practice website (suggested wording will be sent).
- Review repeat prescriptions for OTC medicines.
- Use the leaflets and do not generally give a prescription for treatment of the listed conditions. Note the exceptions in the leaflet. The guidance states 'being exempt from paying a prescription charge does not automatically warrant an exception to the guidance.'
- To obtain more leaflets, please email nwlccgs.communications.nwl@nhs.net

- Remove leaflets, posters and electronic references that this national approach supercedes.

National resources

A quick reference guide and other information is available [here](#).

Exceptions

The national guidance lists exceptions, which are 'scenarios when patients should continue to have their treatments prescribed'. These are summarised in the patient leaflet and the full list can be found [here](#).

In addition, the following local exceptions will continue to apply: medicines that need to be given at school, care home residents, individuals with funded care packages where a carer is required to administer a medicine or product, anyone officially declared homeless, and people with a diagnosis of dementia or learning disability.

Comments and complaints

Please display the posters prominently and actively use the national leaflets to inform patients why you are not prescribing an OTC medicine. Any patients wishing to complain or comment on the implementation of this national guidance can contact nwlccgs.communications.nwl@nhs.net or call 020 3350 4366.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Madhukar Patel, Chair of Brent CCG



Dr Neville Pursell, Chair of Central London CCG

Dr Mohini Parmar, Chair of Ealing CCG

Dr James Cavanagh, Chair of Hammersmith and Fulham CCG

Dr Genevieve Small, Chair of Harrow CCG

Dr Ian Goodman, Chair of Hillingdon CCG



**Dr Annabel Crowe, Chair
of Hounslow CCG**

**Dr Andrew Steeden,
Chair of West London
CCG**