



Share your views

The NHS in Liverpool is considering how to introduce national guidelines on prescriptions to treat some minor health conditions.

Before we make any changes, we want to know what you think.



We are asking for your views by 31 January 2020.



Introduction

NHS Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is considering how to introduce national guidelines which would mean that in most cases you would no longer be given a prescription to treat some minor health conditions. These guidelines would apply to GP practices, pharmacies (chemists) and walk-in centres.

These conditions are often treated with what are known as 'over the counter' medicines, which are available to buy without a prescription from pharmacies and some shops. This leaflet explains what is being proposed.

Before we make any changes, we want to know what you think about these proposals. We are asking for your views between 11 September and 4 December 2019.

We will use your feedback to make a decision about what we do next.

Glossary

Prescription	a note given to you by a doctor (or sometimes a nurse) with details of the medicine or drugs that you need. This can be a piece of paper or electronic.
Over the counter medicines	medicines or drugs you can buy without a prescription.
Guidance/ guidelines	information meant to advise people on how something should be done.
Health condition	something which is making you ill or causing you pain or discomfort.
Clinically effective	a medicine, drug or treatment which has been proven to work through studies or research.
Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)	an NHS organisation responsible for planning local healthcare, including GP care.



Why are we looking at this?

- **To make best use of NHS funding**
If the NHS stopped giving prescriptions to treat things that would get better on their own, or could be treated at home, it could save money which could be invested in other areas of patient care.
- **To better inform patients about how to treat minor conditions and/or seek advice from community pharmacies, where appropriate.**
Lots of things can be treated at home – local pharmacies have the training and experience to help with many common illnesses and ailments.
- **To respond to national guidance to Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs).**
- **To make care more consistent**
At the moment some GPs might decide to prescribe an over the counter treatment while others might not.



What does national guidance say?

In March 2018 the national NHS published a list of 37 situations in which they recommend GPs shouldn't routinely prescribe over the counter medicines.

This includes medicines/treatments for conditions/illnesses:

Which would get better on their own without treatment.

Which could be treated at home using medicines from a pharmacy or shop.

Which aren't backed up by strong clinical evidence.

Now each area of the country, including Liverpool, needs to decide whether to ask local doctors and nurses to follow this guidance.

What are we proposing for Liverpool?

The NHS in Liverpool isn't looking at using the full national guidelines which were published in March 2018 as we don't believe this would be in the best interests of local people. Instead we have developed our own shortened list of 17 situations in which we think GPs and other health professionals shouldn't usually prescribe medicines/treatments.

The list we are proposing to use in Liverpool is:

Condition or item	Why consider not prescribing?
Sore throat	It's likely to get better on its own, without treatment or with over the counter medicines. NHS advice on sore throats: www.nhs.uk/conditions/sore-throat/
Coughs and colds and blocked nose	It's likely to get better on its own, without treatment or with over the counter medicines. NHS advice on colds: www.nhs.uk/conditions/common-cold/
Cradle cap (dry skin on babies heads)	It's likely to get better on its own, without treatment or by treating it with home remedies, NHS advice on cradle cap: www.nhs.uk/conditions/cradle-cap/
Dandruff	It's likely to get better by treating it with over the counter shampoo. NHS advice on dandruff: www.nhs.uk/conditions/dandruff/
Head lice (nits)	There is evidence that wet combing works as well as lotions without exposing children to chemicals. NHS advice on head lice: www.nhs.uk/conditions/head-lice-and-nits/
Infant colic	There is no evidence that treatments work. NHS advice on colic: www.nhs.uk/conditions/colic/
Infrequent constipation	It's likely to get better without treatment, by improving diet or using over the counter medicines. NHS advice on constipation: www.nhs.uk/conditions/constipation/
mild cystitis/ urine infection	Over the counter treatments for mild cystitis are mainly ineffective. Mild cases often get better by themselves within a few days. There's a chance that cystitis could lead to a more serious kidney infection in some cases, so it's important to seek medical advice if your symptoms don't improve in three days. NHS advice on cystitis: www.nhs.uk/conditions/cystitis/
Mild dry skin	It's likely to get better without treatment, or using over the counter treatments. https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/emollients/



Sunburn	It's likely to get better without treatment, or using over the counter treatments. NHS advice on sunburn: www.nhs.uk/conditions/sunburn/
Minor burns and scalds	It's likely to get better without treatment, or using over the counter treatments. NHS advice on burns and scalds: www.nhs.uk/conditions/burns-and-scalds/
Mouth ulcers	Likely to resolve without treatment, treatments are largely for pain relief only. NHS advice on mouth ulcers: www.nhs.uk/conditions/mouth-ulcers/
Prevention of dental caries (tooth decay or cavities)	To be issued by a dentist if clinically necessary
Probiotics	There's some evidence that probiotics may be helpful in some cases, but there's little evidence to support many health claims made about them. NHS advice on probiotics: www.nhs.uk/conditions/probiotics/
Sun protection	In normal circumstances sun protection is for prevention rather than treatment. It would still be prescribed for people with a diagnosed condition.
Vitamins and minerals	Unless there is a diagnosed deficiency there isn't evidence to say they are effective. NHS advice on vitamins and minerals: www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/ The Healthy Start vitamin scheme for pregnant women, babies and young children is not affected by these proposals.
Warts and verrucae	Treatments available are largely ineffective NHS advice on warts and verrucae: www.nhs.uk/conditions/warts-and-verrucae/

Although many minor illnesses can be treated at home, you should always get advice if you are worried about your symptoms, or they don't get better. Pharmacists are trained to help with lots of different health conditions, and will also let you know if they think you need to contact a GP.



What impact do we think this will have in Liverpool?

NHS Liverpool CCG and GPs looked at the national guidance and decided that the full list might pose some problems in Liverpool. The smaller list of 17 changes is considered to present no risk to health because GPs would still be able to prescribe if there was a social/mental/physical health reason to do so.

However, we do recognise that people who don't pay for their prescriptions might be more affected than others, because if they decide to take some medicines for one of the conditions/illnesses we list on pages 4-5, they would have to buy them.

The reduced list we are considering in Liverpool has taken out items where we felt this was going to create a problem – the situations we are looking at are generally where buying an over the counter medicine isn't considered to be of great benefit.

Will there be any exemptions?

Yes. Doctors and nurses would still be able to prescribe over the counter treatments for these conditions if they thought there was a good reason to do so for their patient. These exemptions would include:

- Patients with a long-term or complex condition
- Patients whose symptoms are a result of treatment for a long-term condition – eg a result of immunosuppression
- Where the prescriber thinks there are medical, mental health or social issues which mean their health and/or wellbeing of their patient could be affected if the item wasn't prescribed. This could include people with learning disabilities or dementia.

What about Care at the Chemist?

Care at the Chemist allows people who don't pay for their prescription to get free medicines and advice for certain illnesses from their local pharmacy without having to see a doctor first. Some of the changes we are proposing would also mean you could no longer get certain treatments through the Liverpool Care at the Chemist scheme. These are listed in the table below:

Condition or item	What would change?
Head lice (nits)	The treatment offered would be to use a nit comb for two weeks, followed by lotion if the head lice didn't go.
Infant colic	This treatment would no longer be available from Care at the Chemist.
Infrequent constipation	Only two Care at the Chemist consultations would be provided before the patient was asked to see a GP.
Mild cystitis	This treatment would no longer be available from Care at the Chemist.
Warts and verrucae	This treatment would no longer be available from Care at the Chemist.



Across Liverpool during 2018/19, an estimated **64,000 individual patients** were issued items which we are proposing to restrict prescriptions for.

Of these prescriptions, **92% were for people who don't pay for their prescriptions**. Of these free prescriptions, **18% were for people on low incomes and 49% were for people over 60 years of age**.

Between May 2018 and April 2019 Liverpool CCG spent around **£1.3m on prescribing items available to buy over the counter** for the 17 situations listed on pages 4-5.

Feedback from other areas which have introduced these guidelines suggest that Liverpool could look to save approximately **£130,000 to £260,000 a year** if we went ahead with the changes we are proposing.

How can I share my views?

You can visit www.liverpoolccg.nhs.uk to complete an online questionnaire. More information about the proposals will also be available there.

For a paper version of the questionnaire, or to request another format, call: **0151 247 6409**
email involvement@liverpoolccg.nhs.uk
text **07920 206 386**.

Arabic	الترجمة متوفرة عند الطلب.
Bulgarian	При поискане можем да ви предоставим превод.
Chinese (S)	若有需要时可应要求翻译成中文。
Chinese (T)	若有需要時可應要求翻譯成中文。
Czech	Překlad je k dispozici na požádání.
Farsi	ترجمه این متن در دسترس است.
Hungarian	Erre vonatkozó kérés esetén fordítást tudunk biztosítani.
Kurdish	وههگیران بهر دهسته لهکاتی پیوستیدا.
Polish	Tłumaczenie dostępne na życzenie.
Punjabi	ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਉਪਲਬਧ।
Romanian	Traducere disponibilă la cerere.
Somali	Marka la codsado baa la heli karaa isaga oo turjuman.
Urdu	درخواست کرنے پر ترجمہ دستیاب ہے۔

We'll be sharing more information and updates about this at:

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