**Self-care and Receptionist Triage Policy**

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# Introduction

## Policy statement

The [BMA](https://www.bma.org.uk/media/1936/bma-plg-selfcare-nov-19.pdf) advises that self-care encompasses those things individuals can do to protect their health and manage illness, and can improve an individual’s quality of life. Sheerwater Health Centre does not support the prescribing of medicines and/or treatment for minor conditions when it is considered that:

1. Self-care is the most appropriate solution
2. Medicine/treatment is available over the counter

This policy provides guidance on self-care and incorporates triage guidance for non-clinical staff, enabling them to actively signpost patients to the most appropriate healthcare professional.

## Status

The organisation aims to design and implement policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others, in accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents), Consideration has been given to the impact this policy might have regarding the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time. For the avoidance of doubt, it does not form part of your contract of employment. Furthermore, this document applies to all employees of the organisation and other individuals performing functions in relation to the organisation such as agency workers, locums and contractors.

# Guidance

## Overview

[Annex A](#_toc188) provides the list of conditions deemed appropriate for self-care. This policy does not cover the treatment of long-term conditions or treatment for those conditions that have not responded to over the counter (OTC) medicines. Clinicians are to continue to prescribe medicines for the treatment of complex conditions. Furthermore, those patients whose ability to undertake self-care is compromised due to medical or mental health reasons may be prescribed items if their health could otherwise be adversely affected. ​

## Signposting

Patients contacting this organisation with minor, self-limiting conditions that are deemed appropriate for self-care, as detailed at [Annex A](#_toc188), will be signposted appropriately, for example to the local pharmacy to purchase OTC medicines. The process for effective signposting, including suggested wording, is detailed at [Annex A](#_Annex_A_–).

## Information for patients

The organisation should encourage patients to accept responsibility for their own health and well-being. Patients should be directed to leaflets or information online, which is available for a range of conditions, using platforms such as the [NHS website for England](https://www.nhs.uk/) or the organisations website.

## Supporting people in care homes

People who receive social care should be supported to access OTC products to enable them to self-care with the appropriate safeguards put in place. Access to OTC medicines to self-care is an issue of equality and care home staff should have policies in place to support people who wish to access OTC products to do so in a timely manner.

Staff at this organisation should liaise closely with staff at all care homes at which they have resident patients to identify people who are affected and to make appropriate arrangements. A clinician may recommend the person, relatives or care staff to purchase a specific product to treat a minor ailment for a particular person, such as olive oil for the treatment of ear wax. Verbal or written instructions must be recorded in the individual care plan.

Healthcare professionals can use their clinical judgement with regards to products that are available OTC but are prescribed for the treatment or prevention of long-term or serious conditions. These should be monitored and reviewed at appropriate intervals.

## Clinical discretion

There may be occasions when the clinician considers that the presenting condition is one that is not routinely thought to be self-limiting. In such circumstances, the clinician may opt to prescribe the appropriate medicine. This decision is to be based solely on the presenting clinical factors and not the socio-economic status of the patient.

## Prescription payment exemption

Being exempt from paying prescription charges does not merit an exception to the guidance detailed in this policy.

# Annex A – Signposting guidance

The [NHS England policy guidance: conditions for which over the counter items should not be routinely prescribed in primary care](https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/policy-guidance-conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-be-routinely-prescribed-in-primary-care/) details those conditions for which treatment will not normally be provided on prescription.

This list is to be reviewed by the clinical lead and updated to meet the requirements of the organisation. Note that the conditions listed as self-care do not override the responsibility of healthcare professionals to support their patients in agreeing the most appropriate treatment options for them through taking a shared decision-making approach.

**Process**

When patients telephone the practice to book an appointment, the receptionists will state the following:

***To enable me to make the correct appointment for you, I need to ask you some questions about why you need an appointment. Please let me reassure you that anything you say will be treated in the strictest confidence.***

***Please tell me why you would like an appointment.***

The following table provides a list of conditions, who the patient should make an appointment with and any relevant advice. Once the receptionist has determined the condition, they are to advise the patient accordingly as follows:

***Thank you for explaining why you need an appointment. Your condition does not require you to see a GP; I can make an appointment for you to see [insert name, e.g., nurse].***

**OR**

***Thank you for explaining why you need an appointment. Your condition does not require you to see a GP. It is more appropriate for you to attend [local pharmacy/walk-in centre/A&E]. The nearest pharmacy/walk-in centre A&E is located at [give location and contact details].***

If a receptionist is uncertain, they are to seek advice from a suitably qualified colleague, i.e., nurse or GP, and advise the patient accordingly. Should the patient request to see a GP despite the advice given by the receptionist, they should be offered a call-back. The receptionist is to advise the patient of this procedure as follows:

***As you have requested to see a GP, it will be easier for you if a GP calls you back to discuss your condition with you over the phone. I will arrange for one of our GPs to telephone you between [state hours]. Firstly, I need to take some details to make sure the GP can contact you. Should your condition deteriorate and you become unwell, please call us back or call 111.***

# Table of conditions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Condition** | **Who to make an appointment with** | **Comments** |
| Abscess |  |  |
| Acne |  | If mild, self-care, if severe/ongoing GP |
| Abdominal discomfort |  | If mild, self-care, if severe/ongoing clinician |
| Asthma | Practice Nurse |  |
| Athlete’s foot |  | Self-care initially |
| Back pain |  | Self-care initially |
| Bleeding |  |  |
| Blood pressure | Practice Nurse/HCA |  |
| Blood pressure medication |  |  |
| Breast pain | GP |  |
| Burns and scalds |  | If minor, self-care, or depending on severity, walk-in centre or ED |
| Cellulitis |  |  |
| Chest infection |  |  |
| Chest pain |  | If severe, advise to call 999 or do so for the patient |
| Chickenpox |  |  |
| Cold sore | Pharmacist | Self-care |
| Colic (infants) |  | Self-care initially |
| Common cold | Pharmacist | Self-care |
| Conjunctivitis | Pharmacist | Self-care |
| Constipation |  | If infrequent, self-care, < 3 days pharmacist |
| Contraception |  | Pharmacist can issue emergency contraception |
| Cough |  | Self-care, < 3 days pharmacist |
| Cradle cap |  | Self-care |
| Cuts and abrasions |  | If minor, self-care or, depending on severity, walk-in centre or ED |
| Cystitis |  | If mild, self-care, < 3 days pharmacist |
| Dandruff |  | Self-care |
| Depression |  |  |
| D&V (adults) |  | Self-care, < 3 days pharmacist |
| Dizziness |  |  |
| Dry skin |  | Self-care |
| Dry or tired eyes |  | Self-care |
| Dressing change |  |  |
| Ear ache |  |  |
| Ear syringing |  |  |
| Ear wax |  | Self-care |
| Eczema |  |  |
| Excessive sweating |  | Self-care |
| Eye infection | Pharmacist |  |
| Eye pain/injury | Local eye infirmary |  |
| Flu |  |  |
| Haemorrhoids |  | Pharmacist or walk-in centre |
| Hay fever |  | If mild to moderate or seasonal rhinitis, self-care, < 3 days pharmacist |
| Headache | Pharmacist | Self-care |
| Head injury |  | If the patient has been unconscious, advise A&E |
| Head lice | Pharmacist | Self-care |
| Heartburn |  | Self-care |
| Impetigo | Pharmacist |  |
| Impotence |  |  |
| Indigestion |  | Self-care |
| Infected wounds |  |  |
| Ingrown toenail |  |  |
| Insect bite or sting | Walk-in centre | Self-care initially or, depending on severity, walk-in centre |
| Irritant dermatitis |  | Self-care if mild |
| Knee injury |  |  |
| Menstrual problems | Practice Nurse |  |
| Migraine |  | Self-care if infrequent |
| Minor injuries | Walk-in centre |  |
| Minor conditions |  |  |
| Moles |  |  |
| Mouth ulcers |  | Self-care |
| Nappy rash |  | Self-care |
| Nasal congestion |  | Self-care |
| Neck pain |  |  |
| New patient medical |  |  |
| Nosebleed | Walk-in centre |  |
| Obesity |  |  |
| Oral thrush |  | Self-care |
| Period pain |  | Self-care |
| Podiatry |  |  |
| Pregnancy |  |  |
| Rashes |  |  |
| Ringworm |  | Self-care |
| Shingles |  |  |
| Sickness |  |  |
| Sinusitis |  |  |
| Smears | Practice Nurse |  |
| Smoking cessation | Practice Nurse |  |
| Sore throat (acute) |  | Self-care |
| Sunburn |  | Self-care |
| Sun protection |  | Self-care |
| Sweating mild |  | Self-care |
| Teething |  | Self-care |
| Temperature | Practice Nurse |  |
| Threadworm |  | Self-care |
| Thrush |  | < 3 days pharmacist |
| Toothache |  | Self-care |
| Travel advice/vaccines | Practice Nurse |  |
| Urinary infections |  |  |
| Vitamins, minerals, probiotics |  | Self-care |
| Warts and verrucae |  | Self-care |
| Wounds |  |  |