



# ELLIOTT HALL MEDICAL CENTRE

165-167 UXBRIDGE ROAD, HATCH END, PINNER, HA5 4EA  
TEL: 0208 428 4019 | FAX: 0208 420 1993

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Dear Patient

We are writing to you following your recent consultation at the surgery and medication request for .....

At Elliott Hall Medical Centre we believe that to continue providing the best care for our patients as a whole, we need to understand the limitations and scarce resources of the NHS and work within those constraints.

In regards to this, NHS England carried out a public consultation into the prescription of over the counter medications in 2017 and provided the advice that GPs should no longer routinely prescribe medicines which can be bought over the counter for short term conditions and minor ailments.

### ***What are short term conditions and minor ailments?***

Short term conditions tend to improve on their own without a long-term effect on a person's health e.g. coughs and colds.

Minor ailments are uncomplicated conditions which can be diagnosed and managed without seeing the doctor e.g. colic, threadworms, verrucas/warts, acne, indigestion, fungal skin/nail infections, dry eyes and haemorrhoids.

### ***What are over the counter medications?***

These are medicines that can be bought directly without a prescription from a high street pharmacy, supermarket or other shops and online. Some examples include: paracetamol, ibuprofen, antihistamines, eye drops to treat allergies and indigestion treatments.

### ***Why will over the counter medicines no longer be routinely prescribed?***

Following the NHS England public consultation during July to September 2017 on stopping the routine prescribing of these medicines; the majority of the population supported this proposal.

The NHS spends valuable financial resources and doctors' time on prescribing medicines and other products that you can buy without a prescription. In the year before the consultation, the NHS spent approximately £569 million on prescriptions for medicines which can be purchased over the counter. By reducing this, we can give priority to treatments for people with more serious conditions e.g. cancer, diabetes and mental health problems. This is happening nationwide.

### ***Where can I get these medicines from?***

Medicines can be purchased from community pharmacies and/or supermarkets. These often have long opening times so you can get your medicines quickly and



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treat your condition early, rather than having to wait for a GP appointment. When you do buy your medicine at the pharmacy, please ask for the least expensive appropriate form, as different brands will cost different amounts. If your problem is more serious and needs the attention of a GP, your pharmacist will recognise this and advise you to see your GP.

***I am exempt from paying prescription charges, or my child is under 16yrs old and normally gets their prescriptions free. How does this affect me?***

This policy applies to all people, including those who get their prescriptions free:

- People with a medical/maternity exemption
- Children under the age of 16yrs (it is the parent/guardian/carer's responsibility to purchase these medicines)
- Adults over the age of 60 years
- People receiving income-related support
- People with pre-paid prescriptions

***Are there any exceptions to this?***

Yes:

- If you are being treated with medicines for a long-term condition, you MAY still be able to get them with a prescription.
- If you are unable to buy them over the counter as the medicines has a license which doesn't allow the specific product to be sold to certain groups of patients e.g. babies, breast feeding or pregnant women.
- The prescriber thinks that a patient cannot treat themselves.

If you still have any questions regarding this, please visit the following website:

[www.healthiernorthwestlondon.nhs.uk](http://www.healthiernorthwestlondon.nhs.uk)

We appreciate that this maybe frustrating but thank you for helping us work alongside NHS England to protect NHS resources.

Kind regards

Elliott Hall Medical Centre



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## How your local pharmacy team can help you

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.

### What can you do?

Keeping a few useful medicines at home means you can treat common conditions immediately without needing to see a healthcare professional. **These could include:**

- Painkillers to help with pain, discomfort and fever
- Indigestion medicines, oral rehydration salts and treatments for constipation and diarrhoea
- Treatments for seasonal conditions like colds and hay fever
- Sunblock and after sun
- Basic first aid items (for example plasters or antiseptic cream)

If you have children, make sure you also have products suitable for them. Speak to your local pharmacy team about what medicines to keep at home, where to store them safely and how to use them.

## What if my symptoms don't improve?

Your local pharmacy team can tell you how long to expect the symptoms of your condition to last. If they haven't improved after this time or you start to feel a lot worse, you should:

- Go back to the pharmacy for further advice
- Call NHS111
- Contact your GP

Visit the NHS website ([nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)) and click on 'Services near you' to help you choose the right service

**A&E and 999 should only be used for serious and life-threatening emergencies**

### Finding more information and support

- Visit the NHS website [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) for information and advice on treating minor health concerns
- Find out more about this change to prescription policy at: [nhs.uk/OTCmedicines](https://www.nhs.uk/OTCmedicines)



## Prescribing of over the counter medicines is changing

Your GP, nurse or pharmacist will not generally give you a prescription for over the counter medicines for a range of minor health concerns.

Instead, over the counter medicines are available to buy in a pharmacy or supermarket in your local community.

The team of health professionals at your local pharmacy can offer help and clinical advice to manage minor health concerns and if your symptoms suggest it's more serious, they'll ensure you get the care you need.

Please help the NHS to use resources sensibly.

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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 / athletes foot
Sunburn	Sun protection	Teething / mild toothache
Threadworms	Travel sickness	Warts and verrucae

GPs, nurses or pharmacists will also generally no longer prescribe probiotics and some vitamins and minerals. You can get these from eating a healthy, varied and balanced diet, or buy them at your pharmacy or supermarket.

## Why does the NHS need to reduce prescriptions for over the counter medicines?

The NHS has been spending around £136 million a year on prescriptions for medicines that can be bought from a pharmacy or supermarket, such as paracetamol. By reducing the amount the NHS spends on over the counter medicines, we can give priority to treatments for people with more serious conditions, such as cancer, diabetes and mental health problems.

## Exceptions to the new prescription rules

### You may still be prescribed a medicine for a condition on the list if:

- You need treatment for a long-term condition, e.g. regular pain relief for chronic arthritis or inflammatory bowel disease.
- You need treatment for more complex forms of minor illnesses, e.g. migraines that are very bad and where over the counter medicines do not work.
- You need an over the counter medicine to treat a side effect of a prescription medicine or symptom of another illness, e.g. constipation when taking certain painkillers.
- The medicine has a licence which doesn't allow the product to be sold over the counter to certain groups of patients. This could include babies, children or women who are pregnant or breast-feeding.
- The person prescribing thinks that a patient cannot treat themselves, for example because of mental health problems or severe social vulnerability.

**The reasons vary for each condition. Your GP, nurse or pharmacist will speak to you if this affects you.**