

Self-care & Homely remedies Care Homes

Why is this important?

In 2018, the NHS announced guidance about conditions which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care.

- Residents living in care homes (either residential or nursing) are NOT automatically exempted from this guidance (nor are people who carry NHS prescription exemptions).
- GPs and other prescribers working within the NHS must have due regard for this guidance and will not be in breach of contract if they decide to advise the purchase of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines to treat identified short-term, self-limiting conditions.
- The Care Quality Commission (CQC), National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), Regional Medicines Optimisation Committees (RMOCs) and individual Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) all support the national self-care policy.

What do I need to do?

All service providers need to work toward implementing the NHS England guidance.

GPs/non-medical prescribers/community nursing teams/opticians/dentists

- Support the self-care message
- Focus on the condition not the medicine
- Understand and support prescribing of medications if the condition is long-term or not helped by use of OTC preparations

Care Homes

- Support the self-care message
- Focus on the condition not the medicine
- Develop local care home policy to support self-care and homely medicine use to meet CQC registration
- Use Pharmacist or GP support as necessary

Community Pharmacies

- Support the self-care message
- Focus on the condition not the medicine
- Support care home staff in responding to questions about use of OTC medicines
- Be an expert voice in supporting local care home medication policies

Definitions

- **Homely remedy**—a non-prescription medicine that a care home can purchase over-the-counter either in advance or when needed (i.e. the medicines are owned by the care home) for the use of its residents.
- **Self-care**—self-care or self-management is a term used to include all the actions taken by people to recognise, treat and manage their own health. They may do this independently or in partnership with a care provider.
- **Minor conditions**—self-limiting minor health problems such as headache, toothache, occasional diarrhoea, symptoms of a cold, sore throat or ear wax.

Don't forget

NHS England has advised that there are exceptions to the guidance, such as:

- patients being treated for long term conditions
- circumstances where the product license does not allow the medicine to be bought over the counter (facial use of hydrocortisone)
- “individual patients where the clinician considers that their ability to self-manage is compromised because of medical, mental health or significant social vulnerability to the extent that their health and/or wellbeing could be adversely affected, if reliant on self-care”

In these circumstances 'self-care' may not be appropriate but use of homely remedies will be.

All care homes should ensure that residents have access to homely remedies.

Useful links to tools and resources

These resources are widely available and can be used by all providers to develop their own local systems. The goal is to improve access for all care home residents to the extensive range of quality medication available OTC to help treat common, self-limiting minor conditions. In doing so, care homes and surgeries reserve NHS functionality for those more critical and long-term treatments.

Organisation	Context and links
RMOC (Regional Medicines Optimisation Committees for NHS England via Specialist Pharmacy Service)	The RMOC programme has now issued guidance on this subject, which includes a template policy that can be adapted for local use.
NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)	SC1 Managing Medicines in Care Homes advises on processes for prescribing, handling and administering medicines in care homes. It also recommends how care and services relating to medicines should be provided to people living in care homes, including advice on provision of OTC medicines for care home residents. Recommendation 1.16 details a homely remedies process which should be considered when treating care home residents for minor ailments.
CQC (Care Quality Commission)	The CQC publishes advice which explains homely remedies and provides information on supporting residents in care homes to self-care where appropriate. It also covers how the administration of the OTC medicines to residents should be documented.
BSW CCG (Bath, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group)	Self-care and OTC guidance for prescribers , following on from NHS England national information. Example homely remedy forms & templates.
NHS England	A series of Frequently Asked Questions about how the national self-care guidance pertains to care homes, as well as links to leaflets about self-care in general. A link to signpost patients for further explanation about the change in prescribing for self-care . The national OTC leaflet. An NHS England developed Easy-Read leaflet to explain self-care to people with Learning Difficulties. A one-page summary of the self-care conditions aimed at patients to support getting advice from local community pharmacies. A link to signpost people to what they can expect from a local community pharmacy .
PrescQIPP	PrescQIPP is an NHS-funded not for profit organisation that supports quality and optimised prescribing for patients, including those living in care homes (password access required). They have produced information about self-care aimed at receptionists and other front-line staff . A toolkit for implementing self-care aimed at GP practices. A bulletin with links for developing a local homely remedy policy .
Coventry & Rugby CCG	An excellent set of resources to use to support local care home policies .
BNSSG CCG	Another contribution to good practice around homely medicines .
Devon CCG	A link to another CCG's information and guidance on homely remedies .
National Care Forum	A comprehensive independent guide to homely remedies .