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## **Change on prescribing of Over the Counter medicines**

NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has confirmed a change relating to NHS prescribing of a range of medicines, vitamins and minerals that are available to buy over the counter from pharmacies and supermarkets.

This follows a national consultation and subsequent NHS England guidance that recommends that over the counter medicines associated with a number of minor, short term conditions, which either get better by themselves or can be self-treated by the individual, should no longer be routinely prescribed by GP surgeries.

It includes medicines for coughs, colds, infrequent cold sores of the lip, mild to moderate hayfever, mild cystitis, nappy rash, warts and verrucas, earwax and head lice.

The CCG's Priorities Committee has considered the NHS England guidance and agreed that the recommendations should be fully implemented across the county.

In line with national guidance, the CCG has agreed exceptions to the change, which include:

- Patients prescribed an over the counter medicine for a long term or more complex condition or;
- Where a clinician considers that a patient's wellbeing could be affected due to health, mental health or significant social vulnerability.

NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group's Medicines Lead, Dr Charles Buckley said:

"The CCG as a commissioner (buyer) of services and treatments has a duty to plan and prioritise fairly and use the public money available to achieve the maximum health benefit for the people of Gloucestershire.

Everyone is aware that there are considerable calls on each 'Gloucestershire pound' and each pound can only be spent once.

It is vital therefore, that commissioners make decisions based on careful examination of the value - medical benefits versus costs - of each spending choice they make.

Costs to the NHS are often higher than those over the counter when you factor in other fees such as those for dispensing or consultation.

For the vast majority of the public, the decision will not result in any change, but for some patients, who are currently able to get these medicines on NHS prescription from their GP

surgery, they will no longer be able to do so. Instead they will need to buy the medicines themselves.

Decisions like this are always hard and difficult for some people to accept, although essential if we are to find resources for new, approved medical treatments that can transform lives.”

The CCG anticipates that the annual prescribing cost for these medicines in Gloucestershire is around £2 million and believes that this money could be put to better use to support vital healthcare in the county.

The change should also help to ease some of the pressure on GP surgeries, so doctors and other healthcare professionals can concentrate on patients with more serious or long term conditions. Pharmacies will continue to play a key role in advising people on self-care of minor ailments, medicines and signposting to other services if needed.

This change will take effect from 31 May, 2018 and will be widely communicated in the media, social media, on the CCG website and in GP surgeries and pharmacies.

## **Additional Information:**

The change applies to medicines for a total of 35 minor, short term conditions. It also applies to a range of vitamins and minerals, unless from medical tests it is clear that the person does not have sufficient natural levels. For the full list see: [www.gloucestershireccg.nhs.uk/otc/](http://www.gloucestershireccg.nhs.uk/otc/)

### Exceptions to the change

A full list of exceptions to the change can be found at: [www.gloucestershireccg.nhs.uk/otc/](http://www.gloucestershireccg.nhs.uk/otc/)

### Pricing

The average cost of many of these medicines will be around £2-£3 - for example olive oil ear drops, antifungal skin cream or antihistamine tablets.

The price of these items may vary slightly, but will range from around 35p (for a small pack of paracetamol) to around £5 (for a bottle of branded cough medicine). Patients should therefore be aware that it will always be cheaper to buy the ‘unbranded pack’ or ‘generic version’ where these are available.

### Video

Dr Charles Buckley explains the change on prescribing of Over the Counter medicines: [www.gloucestershireccg.nhs.uk/otc/](http://www.gloucestershireccg.nhs.uk/otc/)