

# Good Practice Guidance: Supporting people to self-care in care homes



Clinical Commissioning Group

## Background

This guideline provides care home staff with advice needed to be able to support residents who wish to self-care. The Care Quality Commission encourages supporting self-care in care homes.

Over the counter (OTC) products can be categorised as follows:

### 1. Self-care

Products which can be purchased by or on behalf of a resident which have been advised or recommended for use by a health care professional. OTC products for self-care are usually not prescribed through the NHS because they are classed as having 'limited evidence of clinical effectiveness' or are for self-limiting conditions e.g. olive oil drops.

### 2. Personal care

Products which can be purchased for a resident that do not need a health care professional involved, and do not need additional guidance beyond the packaging advice. They may not any medication e.g. cocoa butter body moisturiser, shampoo, toothpaste.

### 3. Minor ailments

Products which can be purchased for minor ailments/ conditions that are:

- self-limiting minor health problems and do not need treatment as they will heal on their own such as headache, toothache, occasional diarrhoea, symptoms of a cold, sore throat
- which are appropriate for self-care in that the person suffering does not normally need medical care but may want help with symptom relief from a local pharmacy and use an OTC medicine

### 4. Homely remedy

These are a limited range of OTC medicines that can be purchased as homely remedy stock by the care home and given to residents where the GP has indicated it would be appropriate in accordance with a Homely Remedy policy e.g. paracetamol, Laxido®. Refer to Good Practice Guidance 'The Use of Over the Counter medicines and Homely Remedies' for more information. Homely remedies can only be used for an agreed period, usually up to a maximum of 48 hours prior to GP review.

## Supporting with self-care

Care homes should support their residents to access and purchase OTC products to enable them to self-care in a similar way as a person would in their own home. Supporting residents to self-care promotes/maintains independence and dignity in care.

Self-care treatments can either be:

- Purchased by or on behalf of a resident where advice from a healthcare professional may not have been sought. If in any doubt whether the product is safe and appropriate for the resident to use check with the resident's GP/ healthcare professional.
- Suggested by a healthcare professional; the self-care treatment product can be purchased by or on behalf of a resident; the healthcare professional should provide advice on its use and how long the treatment is to continue.

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Examples of conditions suitable for self-care include (but are not limited to) treatments for:

- Earwax
- Coughs and colds
- Indigestion and heartburn
- Mild dry skin
- Dry eyes
- Conjunctivitis
- Dandruff

### Policies and procedures

Care homes should have a policy to support people who wish to self-care. This should include the necessary safeguards required when carers or relatives provide OTC products. For example, how you protect people who may lack mental capacity to make decisions about their care or treatment.

It is good practice to discuss health needs and medications with the person and their family. An ideal opportunity is on admission to the care home; this should also include the use of OTC products.

Residents (or their relatives) may provide their own OTC products. This should be in consultation with a healthcare professional, such as a GP or pharmacist. These products are not for general use or to be put as 'stock' and must remain the property of that resident.

All OTC products purchased on behalf of the person or brought into a care setting should be:

- checked, to make sure they are of suitable quality and appropriate for use
- in date
- in the original pack
- stored according to the manufacturer's guidance
- recorded in the care plan and if appropriate MAR chart
- reviewed for potential interactions with prescribed medicines before using the medication/ product. This can be checked with an appropriate healthcare professional.

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If care staff are responsible for administration of the self-care product, record this on the MAR chart according to the care home medicines management policy.

The resident's care plan should include when the self-care product/ medication is to be reviewed and how to trigger reviews; this provides assurance that the resident's self-care is safe and still appropriate. Discussions with the healthcare professional should be recorded in the care plan as per care home policy.

Self-care treatment should be recorded on the MAR chart handwritten clearly with the name of the medication/ product, dose (if required), and instructions.

If the resident wishes to self-administer their self-care medication a risk assessment should take place (alongside other prescribed medication). The medication should be stored safely and securely in accordance with the manufacturer's guidance, preferably in a lockable cabinet or lockable drawer in the resident's room.

It is important to liaise with healthcare professionals to identify residents that would not be suitable for self-care preparations and make reasonable adjustments for them.

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## Community Pharmacist Consultation Service

The NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS) is a community pharmacist led clinical service that manages referrals from NHS 111 for minor illnesses. The service has extended to include GP referrals to community pharmacists for lower acuity, minor illness conditions.

### References:

- NICE [SC1], Managing medicines in care homes, March 2014  
[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/sc1](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/sc1)
- CQC: Over the counter medicines and homely remedies  
<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/over-counter-medicines-homely-remedies>
- PrescQIPP self-care Resources for professionals Resources for professionals. <https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-227-self-care-over-the-counter-items/>
- Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs/>
- NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS)  
[NHS England » NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service \(CPCS\) – integrating pharmacy into urgent care](#)

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