

## NHS England recommendations on Over the Counter Medicines.

NHS England has identified the following self-limiting conditions and examples of medicines that can be purchased over-the-counter for their treatment and those conditions deemed suitable for self-care. (This list and examples given are not exhaustive).

Self-limiting Conditions			
Condition	Description	Annual cost to NHS	Example products that could be bought over the counter
<b>Acute sore throat</b>	A sore throat due to a viral or bacterial cause is a self-limiting condition. Symptoms resolve within 3 days in 40% of people, and within 1 week in 85% of people, irrespective of whether or not the sore throat is due to a streptococcal infection.	c. < £100,000	Sore throat lozenges and sprays
<b>Infrequent cold sores of the lip</b>	old sores caused by the herpes simplex virus usually clear up without treatment within 7 to 10 days. Antiviral creams are available over the counter from pharmacies without a prescription and if used correctly, these can help ease symptoms and speed up the healing time.	c. < £100,000	Aciclovir cream or Zovirax cold sore cream
<b>Conjunctivitis</b>	Treatment isn't usually needed for conjunctivitis as the symptoms usually clear within a week. There are several self-care measures that may help with symptoms	c. £500,000	Chloramphenicol eye drops or ointment Sodium cromoglicate eye drops Otrivine-antistin eye drops
<b>Coughs, colds and nasal congestion</b>	Most colds start to improve in 7 to 10 days. Most coughs clear up within two to three weeks. Both conditions can cause nasal congestion. Neither condition requires any treatment.	c. £1.3m	Simple linctus, pholcodine linctus Pseudoephedrine nasal sprays and oral preparations Xylometazoline and ephedrine nasal sprays and drops
<b>Cradle cap</b>	Cradle cap is harmless and doesn't usually itch or cause discomfort. It usually appears in babies in the first two months of their lives, and clears up without treatment within weeks to a few months.	c. £4.5m	Olive oil, cradle cap shampoos
<b>Haemorrhoids</b>	In many cases, haemorrhoids don't cause symptoms and some people don't even realise they have them. Haemorrhoids often clear up by themselves after a few days. Making simple dietary changes and not straining on the toilet are often recommended first.	c. £500,000	Anusol cream, ointment or suppositories Anusol HC cream, ointment, suppositories
<b>Infant colic</b>	As colic eventually improves on its own, medical treatment isn't usually recommended. There are some over-the-counter treatments available that could be tried however; there is limited evidence for the effectiveness of these treatments.	c.<£100,000	Simeticone liquid Dimeticone liquid Colief liquid

<b>Mild cystitis</b>	<p>Mild cystitis is a common type of urinary tract inflammation, normally caused by an infection; however it is usually more of a nuisance than a cause for serious concern.</p> <p>Mild cases can be defined as those that are responsive to symptomatic treatment but will also clear up on their own. If symptoms don't improve in 3 days, despite self-care measures, then the patient should be advised to see their GP.</p>	c. £300,000	Potassium citrate mixture or sachets Cranberry products
<b>Mild irritant dermatitis</b>	<p>Contact dermatitis is a type of eczema triggered by contact with a particular substance. Once treated most people can expect their symptoms to improve and/or clear up completely if the irritant or allergen can be identified and removed or avoided</p> <p>It is most commonly caused by irritants such as soaps, washing powders, detergents, solvents or regular contact with water.</p> <p>Treatment normally involves avoiding the allergen or irritant and treating symptoms with over the counter emollients and topical corticosteroids.</p>	c. £14.5m	Emollient creams and lotions Mild corticosteroid creams for patients over 10 years old and subject to usage rules. (e.g. hydrocortisone)
<b>Dandruff (mild scaling of the scalp without itching)</b>	<p>Dandruff is a common skin condition; it isn't contagious or harmful and can be easily treated with over the counter anti-fungal shampoos.</p>	c. £4.5m	Shampoos including antifungal, antiseptic, selenium and coal tar
<b>Diarrhoea (adults)</b>	<p>Diarrhoea normally affects most people from time to time and is usually nothing to worry about. However it can take a few days to a week to clear up. Acute diarrhoea is usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection and other causes include drugs, anxiety or a food allergy. OTC treatments can help replace lost fluids or reduce bowel motions.</p> <p><b>This recommendation does not apply to children.</b></p>	c. £2.8m	Loperamide Oral rehydration sachets
<b>Dry eyes/sore tired eyes</b>	<p>Dry eye syndrome, or dry eye disease, is a common condition that occurs when the eyes don't make enough tears, or the tears evaporate too quickly.</p> <p>Most cases of sore tired eyes resolve themselves.</p> <p>Patients should be encouraged to manage both dry eyes and sore eyes by implementing some self-care measures such as good eyelid hygiene and avoidance of environmental factors alongside treatment</p> <p>Mild to moderate cases of dry eye syndrome or sore tired eyes can usually be treated using lubricant eye treatments that consist of a range of drops, gels and ointments that can be easily be purchased over the counter.</p>	c. £14.8m	Hypromellose eye drops, carbomer 980 gel
<b>Earwax</b>	<p>Earwax is produced inside ears to keep them clean and free of germs. It usually passes out of the ears harmlessly, but sometimes too much can</p>	c. £300,000	Olive Oil, sodium bicarbonate ear drops

	<p>build up and block the ears. A build-up of earwax is a common problem that can often be treated using eardrops bought from a pharmacy. These can help soften the earwax so that it falls out naturally.</p>		
<b>Excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis)</b>	<p>Hyperhidrosis is a common condition in which a person sweats excessively. First line treatment involves simple lifestyle changes. It can also be treated with over the counter high strength antiperspirants. An antiperspirant containing aluminium chloride is usually the first line of treatment and is sold in most pharmacies.</p>	c. £200,000	Aluminium chloride 20% solutions (e.g. Driclor, Anhydrol Forte)
<b>Head lice</b>	<p>Head lice are a common problem, particularly in school children aged 4-11. They're largely harmless, but can live in the hair for a long time if not treated and can be irritating and frustrating to deal with. Head lice can easily be treated with wet combing or over the counter medicines that can be purchased from a pharmacy.</p>	c. £600,000	Dimeticone, malathion, cyclomethicone, permethrin shampoos and liquids
<b>Indigestion and heartburn</b>	<p>Most people have indigestion at some point. Usually, it's not a sign of anything more serious and can be treated at home without the need for medical advice, as it's often mild and infrequent and specialist treatment isn't required. Most people are able to manage their indigestion by making simple diet and lifestyle changes, or taking medication such as antacids. Most people can ease symptoms by simple changes to diet and lifestyle and avoiding foods that make indigestion worse. (e.g. rich spicy or fatty foods, caffeinated drinks).</p>	£7.5m	Peptac, Gaviscon
<b>Infrequent constipation</b>	<p>Constipation can affect people of all ages and can be just for a short period of time. It can be effectively managed with a change in diet or lifestyle and short term use of over the counter laxatives.</p>	c. £22.8m	Senna, lactulose, macrogol sachets
<b>Infrequent migraine</b>	<p>Migraine is a common health condition, affecting around one in every five women and around one in every 15 men. Mild infrequent migraines can be adequately treated with over the counter pain killers and a number of combination medicines for migraine are available that contain both painkillers and anti-sickness medicines.</p>	c. £700,000	Analgesics, migravele, triptans
<b>Insect bites and stings</b>	<p>Most insect bites and stings are not serious and will get better within a few hours or days. Over-the-counter treatments can help ease symptoms, such as painkillers, creams for itching and antihistamines.</p>	c. £5.3m	Antihistamine oral and topical preparations, calamine lotion Topical corticosteroids (for patients over 10 years old and

			subject to rules on usage)
<b>Mild Acne</b>	Acne is a common skin condition that affects most people at some point. Although acne can't be cured, it can be controlled with treatment. Several creams, lotions and gels for treating acne are available at pharmacies. Treatments can take up to three months to work.	c. £800,000	Benzoyl peroxide creams and gels
<b>Mild dry skin</b>	Most people manage dry skin or sun burn symptoms themselves or prevent symptoms developing, using sun protection, by using products that can easily be bought in a pharmacy or supermarket. Emollients are often used to help manage dry, itchy or scaly skin conditions.	c. £100,000	Emollient creams and lotions
<b>Mild to moderate hay fever/seasonal rhinitis</b>	Hay fever is a common allergic condition that affects up to one in five people. There's currently no cure for hay fever, but most people with mild to moderate symptoms are able to relieve symptoms with OTC treatments recommended by a pharmacist.	c. £1.1m	Antihistamines, nasal sprays, eye drops
<b>Minor burns and scalds</b>	Burns and scalds are damage to the skin caused by heat. Both are treated in the same way. Depending on how serious a burn is, it is possible to treat burns at home. Antiseptic creams and treatments for burns should be included in any products kept in a medicine cabinet at home.	c. £200,000	Antiseptic creams, analgesics
<b>Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and/or fever (e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain)</b>	In most cases, headaches, period pain, mild fever and back pain can be treated at home with over-the-counter painkillers and lifestyle changes, such as getting more rest and drinking enough fluids. Patients should be encouraged to keep a small supply of OTC analgesics in their medicines cabinets at home so they are able to manage minor ailments at home without the need for a GP appointment. Examples of conditions where patients should be encouraged to self – care include: Headache, colds, fever, earache, teething, period pain, cuts, self-limiting musculoskeletal pain, sprains and strains, bruising, toothache, sinusitis/nasal congestion, recovery after a simple medical procedure, aches and pains and sore throat.	c. £38.2m	Analgesics, NSAIDs, topical anti-inflammatory preparations
<b>Mouth ulcers</b>	Mouth ulcers are usually harmless and do not need to be treated because most clear up by themselves within a week or two. Mouth ulcers are common and can usually be managed at home, without seeing your dentist or GP. However, OTC treatment can help to reduce swelling and ease any discomfort.	c. £5.5m	Local anaesthetic gels, Hydrocortisone buccal tablets(not for children under 12 years old)

<b>Nappy rash</b>	Up to a third of babies and toddlers in nappies have nappy rash at any one time. Nappy rash can usually be treated at home using barrier creams purchased at the supermarket or pharmacy. Nappy rash usually clears up after about three days if recommended hygiene tips are followed.	c. £500,000	Barrier preparations such as Sudocrem, metanium
<b>Oral thrush</b>	Oral Thrush is a minor condition that can be treated without the need for a GP consultation or prescription in the first instance. It is common in babies and older people with dentures or those using steroid inhalers. It can easily be treated with over the counter gel.	c. £4.5m	Daktarin oral gel, nystatin oral suspension
<b>Prevention of dental caries</b>	The dentist may advise on using higher-strength fluoride toothpaste if you are particularly at risk of tooth decay. Higher fluoride toothpastes and mouthwashes can be purchased over the counter.	c.< £100, 000	Mouthwashes Toothpaste
<b>Ringworm/athlete's foot</b>	Ringworm is a common fungal infection that can cause a red or silvery ring-like rash on the skin. Despite its name, ringworm doesn't have anything to do with worms. Athlete's foot is a rash caused by a fungus that usually appears between the toes. These fungal infections, medically known as "tinea", are not serious and are usually easily treated with over the counter treatments. However, they are contagious and easily spread so it is important to practice good foot hygiene.	c. £3m	Topical preparations containing miconazole, clotrimazole etc.
<b>Teething/Mild toothache</b>	Teething can be distressing for some babies, but there are ways to make it easier for them. Teething gels often contain a mild local anaesthetic, which helps to numb any pain or discomfort caused by teething and these can be purchased from a pharmacy. If baby is in pain or has a mild raised temperature (less than 38°C) then paracetamol or ibuprofen suspension can be given. Toothache can come and go or be constant. Eating or drinking can make the pain worse, particularly if the food or drink is hot or cold. Mild toothache in adults can also be treated with over the counter painkillers.	c. £5.5m	Teething gels, paracetamol, ibuprofen
<b>Threadworms</b>	Threadworms (pinworms) are tiny worms in your stools. They are common in children and can be spread easily. They can be effectively treated without the need to visit the GP. Treatment for threadworms can easily be bought from pharmacies. This is usually a chewable tablet or liquid you swallow. Strict hygiene measures can also help clear up a threadworm infection and reduce the	c. £200,000	Mebendazole

	likelihood of reinfection Everyone in the household will require treatment, even if they don't have symptoms.		
<b>Travel sickness</b>	Mild motion sickness can be treated by various self-care measures (e.g. stare at a fixed object, fresh air, listen to music etc.); more severe motion sickness can be treated with over the counter medicines.	c. £4.5m	Cinnarizine, hyoscine
<b>Warts and verrucae</b>	Most people will have warts at some point in their life. They are generally harmless and tend to go away on their own eventually. Several treatments can be purchased from a pharmacy to get rid of warts and verrucae more quickly if patients require treatment.	c. £900,000	Products containing Salicylic acid , glutaraldehyde

## NHS England Table 2.

**Examples of medicines that have little evidence of benefit** (Note: this list and examples given is not exhaustive)

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Annual cost to NHS</b>	<b>Example products that could be bought over the counter</b>
<b>Probiotics</b>	There is currently insufficient clinical evidence to support prescribing of probiotics within the NHS for the treatment or prevention of diarrhoea of any cause.	c. £1.1m	VSL#3, lactobacillus, acidophilus - VSL#3 for use under the supervision of a physician for the maintenance of antibiotic induced remission of ileoanal pouchitis in adults.
<b>Vitamins and minerals</b>	There is insufficient high quality evidence to demonstrate the clinical effectiveness of vitamins and minerals. Vitamins and minerals are essential nutrients which most people can and should get from eating a healthy, varied and balanced diet. In	c. £ 48.1m	Pharmacy own brands of vitamins/ multivitamins (i.e. Boots, Lloyds, Superdrug, Valupak), Haliborange, Sanatogen, Fruitivits Sachets, Spatone, Seven Seas, Lamb, Vita E, Osteocaps, Osteocare, Redoxon, Centrum, etc –