

Care Homes Good Practice Guidance

Homely Remedies and Self-Care



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Introduction

This guidance has been produced to support care home residents and their carers to manage the treatment of conditions which may require an Over the Counter (OTC) product. OTC products may be required as part of a resident's self-care or to manage minor ailments.

The Care Quality Commission states that as a matter of equality care home residents should have access to OTC products to enable them to self-care and manage minor ailments and that care homes should have systems in place to allow this to happen in a timely manner. In addition, in March 2018 NHS England produced guidance advising that OTC products should not routinely be prescribed for 35 conditions that are either considered self-care conditions or a minor ailment. See: [NHS England » Guidance on conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care](#)

OTC products may be obtained by residents and their carers either through a homely remedies or self-care protocol. This guidance explains what these two methods are and how residents and their carers can obtain OTC products using either method in a safe manner.

This guidance is to be used in conjunction with the care homes medicines policy. Access to homely remedies or self-care OTCs should be enabled through the overall medicines policy for the care home.

Definitions

OTC Products: Over the Counter is an overarching term for non-prescription medicines/products which are usually classed as either GSL or P medicines. They may also include nutritional supplements such as vitamins and minerals.

GSL: General Sales List medicines are widely available in retail shops and do not require a prescription to obtain.

P: Pharmacy Only medicines are only available from a registered pharmacy and do not require a prescription.

Self-care: Self-care is the actions an individual can take for themselves to develop, protect, maintain, and improve their health and wellbeing. Individuals may do this independently or with support from others such as carers. Certain OTC products can be purchased to support an individual to self-care.

Minor ailment: These are conditions that resolve on their own without treatment, or conditions that do not typically require medical attention.

Homely remedy: These are OTC products purchased by the care home without the need for a prescription to help manage self-care conditions and minor ailments and can be administered for up to 48 hours without the need for medical attention. Typical minor ailment conditions such as indigestion, coughs, mild to moderate pain and constipation can be treated with homely remedies. If to be used for longer than 48

hours this must be stated in the medicines policy and agreed with the GP (up to a maximum of 72 hours).

Exemptions

This guidance applies to all care home residents over 18 years of age and includes those who would normally be exempt from paying prescription charges. The following people are however exempt and would require medical attention such as a referral to the resident's GP (General Practitioner) or a GP Clinical Pharmacist.

1. Residents that are prescribed OTC products for a long-term/chronic condition.
2. Residents that have symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor and have red flag symptoms.
3. Residents that normally have their medication administered covertly or via Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy (PEG).
3. At the request of the resident's GP.
4. Circumstances where the product licence does not allow an OTC sale (e.g. hydrocortisone cream for use on the face).
5. Where a safeguarding issue has been identified preventing the use of homely remedies or self-care protocols.

There are more protocol specific exemptions to consider which will be outlined in the relevant sections.

Homely Remedies Protocol

Following the homely remedies protocol is one method of allowing residents to have access to OTC products in the care home, should they require. Following this protocol can allow carers to support their residents to obtain OTC products at the home in a safe manner ([see definitions for further information](#)).

Homely remedies do not require a prescription. Implementation as a minimum is between care home and the resident's GP, GP Clinical Pharmacist or other appropriate primary care health care professional involved in the resident's care. The GP practice should authorise homely remedy use and complete an individual agreement form (see appendix 1). The PMOT Care Home team can facilitate if required, for groups of patients being initiated on homely remedies.

Carers who are competent to assess the need for a homely remedy may administer a homely remedy if the individual agreement form permits. It is the carer's responsibility to check the homely remedy is appropriate at that point in time.

Obtaining

- Homely remedies can be purchased from any community pharmacy, supermarket or other retail stores by the care home.
- The receipt of purchase should be kept by the care home for the duration the homely remedy is kept at the home as a minimum.
- The purchase should be recorded as part of a running balance of stock (see appendix 2).
- Re-using any other medication either prescribed or non-prescribed as a homely remedy (for example by removing a medication dispensing label for a resident no longer at the home) is inappropriate.

Duration of Use

- Homely remedies can be administered with instruction from the individual agreement form (appendix 1) at the discretion of a resident's carer for **up to 48 hours or the agreed period stated in the local medicines policy (but never longer than 72 hours)**. Agree the duration of time that a treatment can continue with the GP practice before GP referral is made.
- If symptoms persist for longer than 48 hours (or the agreed period in the medicines policy – but never longer than 72 hours), the resident will require medical attention and the resident should be referred to their GP or GP Clinical Pharmacist for assessment.
- If a homely remedy is needed regularly for a resident the GP or GP Clinical Pharmacist should be informed.

Medication Choice

- Only stock purchased by the care home for administration under the 'Homely Remedies Policy' may be used.
- Each resident must be assessed individually by their GP or a GP Clinical Pharmacist to ensure suitability for each remedy (see appendix 1).
- The residents GP or GP Clinical Pharmacist who is completing the individual agreement form will require information from carers which could include: a full list of prescribed and non-prescribed items and the resident's current weight. Note: Paracetamol dosing varies depending on a person's weight.
- Residents may be excluded from receiving specific homely remedies and this information will be recorded in the individual agreement form.
- **An example of a homely remedy authorisation form is provided in Appendix 1. This includes a list of medicines suitable for use as homely remedies along with instructions, indications, dosing and warnings.**
- Only medicines listed in the individual agreement form can be kept at the care home. However other OTC products may be considered for homely remedy use, if they have been approved by the resident's GP or the Surgery Pharmacist first.
- External preparations, suppositories, dressings, vitamins, minerals and herbal medicines should be excluded from the homely remedy policy. These items may be purchased as part of self-care (see self-care protocol).
- Carers should consider people's religious beliefs, dietary preferences, intolerances, allergies, and swallowing difficulties before administering a homely remedy.

Storage

- Each homely remedy should be labelled clearly by the home 'homely remedy'.
- All homely remedies must be stored in their original packaging.
- All homely remedies should be stored securely in a lockable cupboard or trolley and kept separate to the resident's prescribed medication.

Record Keeping

- All administered doses of homely remedies must be recorded manually in the Medicines Administration Record (MAR Chart, including eMARs) in accordance with the medicines policy at the care home. It must be annotated clearly on the MAR/eMAR chart that a homely remedy was used.
- Carers should record the reason for administering a homely remedy to a resident in the resident's care plan.
- When a homely remedy has been administered it is important to update the stock sheet (appendix 2).

New Residents

- When a new resident arrives at the care home it is important for the carers to notify the GP or GP Clinical Pharmacist that the new resident needs to be assessed for homely remedies so an Individual agreement form is put in place.

Note: Homely remedies are for care home resident use only.

Self-Care Protocol

Following the self-care protocol is another method of allowing residents to have access to OTC products in the care home should they require. Following this protocol can allow carers to support their residents to obtain OTC products at the home in a safe manner (see definitions for further information).

Encouraging and supporting residents to practice self-care can empower them to take greater control of their health and prevent long term illness.

Allowing residents to purchase OTC products via the self-care protocol does not require a prescription from the resident's General Practitioner (GP) but may require advice from healthcare professionals (For example: GP, Community or GP Clinical Pharmacist, Pharmacy Technician, Nurse, Paramedic, or a Physiotherapist) before administering to the resident.

Some examples of self-care conditions include: coughs, indigestion, constipation, diarrhoea, conjunctivitis, dry skin or ear wax. This is not an exhaustive list of self-care conditions.

Obtaining

- Self-care OTC products can be purchased by a resident or their family if required for their personal use from any community pharmacy, supermarket or other retail store. Carers can support the resident to make this purchase.
- It is important to initially check if the OTC product is available as a homely remedy in which case the resident would not be required to purchase the OTC as they can be treated with the homely remedy for up to 48 hours (or the agreed period in the medicines policy, which must also be agreed with the GP, 72 hours is the maximum period).
- There are multiple scenarios in which a self-care OTC product may be purchased:
 1. The item is part of their personal care and therefore does not require recommendation from a healthcare professional prior to purchasing
 2. The item is recommended by healthcare professional who has asked the resident to purchase a specific product for a minor ailment. A GP or another healthcare professional may instruct the care home staff to purchase a specific OTC product to treat a minor ailment.
Note: This recommendation can be received via email through an NHS secure account.
 3. This item is recommended following a referral into the Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS) - The surgery or 111 may refer minor ailment queries into the Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS). During this consultation a community pharmacist will have a same day consultation with the resident and carers and may advise the purchase of a specific OTC product.
- If carers are in any doubt on whether the OTC product can be obtained as part of the resident's self-care, then they should contact a healthcare professional for advice.

Duration of Use

- This will differ for each self-care OTC product purchased and can be found in the products literature or by confirming with the healthcare professional who has advised on its purchase or the community pharmacist that has sold product if this applies.

Medication Choice

- All OTC products should be checked for potential interactions with prescribed products and avoided if the patient has known allergies to the product. If there is any uncertainty a health care professional should be consulted, and the discussion documented.
- Carers should consider people's religious beliefs, dietary preferences, intolerances, allergies, and swallowing difficulties before administering a self-care OTC product.
- Some OTC products may be used as part of personal care and do not usually require a healthcare professional's advice to purchase e.g. probiotics, suncream or anti-dandruff shampoo.

Storage

- All self-care OTC products should be labelled 'self-care purchased item' with the resident's full name.
- All self-care OTC products must be stored in their original packaging.
- All self-care OTC products should be stored securely in a lockable cupboard or trolley and kept separate to the resident's prescribed medication. This also applies to residents who self-administer their medications.

Record Keeping

- If a healthcare professional has advised on the purchase of a self-care OTC product for a resident this must be recorded in writing in the resident's care plan by carers. If the recommendation was made via email this can be saved/printed for reference if required.
- Any self-care OTC product administered should be recorded in the Medicines Administration Record (MAR Chart, including eMAR) with the dose given and in accordance with the medicines policy at the care home. It must be annotated clearly on the MAR/eMAR chart that a self-care OTC product was used.
- Carers should inform the resident's GP that an OTC product has been purchased and is being administered if the GP is unaware. This allows the GP to record this on the resident's clinical record.

New Residents

- The care home should make all new residents and their relatives aware that OTC products may need to be purchased as part of self-care and personal care.

Review

- Homely remedy OTC products: the appropriateness of a homely remedy for each resident should be reviewed **as a minimum annually**. Individual agreement forms will require updating by the GP or GP Clinical Pharmacist.
- It may be appropriate to review sooner if there has been changes in circumstances.
- Self-care OTC products: residents and carers should have received advice on how long the OTC product is to be used for prior to purchasing and when a review is required.
- If a resident's symptoms appear to worsen after using a homely remedy or self-care product, carers should seek advice from a healthcare professional immediately.

Audit

Care home staff should have a system in place to regularly check stock and expiry dates of all homely remedies and self-care products as a **minimum monthly**. Care home staff should remove and replace (if required) any expired stock immediately. Some products may have a shorter shelf-life once opened, advice on this can be found in the product's literature.

Disposal

Any expired stock should be disposed of in line with the care home's policy on the disposal of medication.

Training and Staff Authorisation

All care home staff administering either homely remedies or self-care products to residents should have training on the use of both protocols with regular refresher training when necessary. Any carers that use the homely remedy or self-care protocol should be named and the care home should keep a record of signed confirmation to state they are competent to administer the medicinal product, acknowledging that they will be accountable for their actions.

Homely Remedy vs Self-Care Comparison table

	Homely Remedies	Products for Self-care
Obtaining	Purchased by care home.	Purchased by a resident or their carer/family, on their behalf.
Duration of Use	Administered at the discretion of a carer to a resident for up to 48 Hours, (or the agreed duration in the medicines policy and agreed with the GP, maximum 72 hours)	Determined by the condition being treated. May be used short or long term.
Medication Choice	Limited list of medications usually for a smaller number of conditions (e.g. pain, constipation, indigestion/heartburn etc).	More extensive list of medications, covering a larger number of conditions.
Storage	Locked away from other medicines, clearly annotated as homely remedies.	Locked away from other medicines, clearly annotated as a self-care product with the resident's full name.
Record Keeping	Administration recorded on the MAR/eMAR chart as 'homely-remedy' for duration of treatment.	Administration recorded on the MAR/eMAR chart as 'self-care' for duration of treatment. Note: This is not required for some personal care products.

Other Useful Guidance

- Care Quality Commission (2020) Over the counter medicines and homely remedies advice: [Over the counter medicines and homely remedies - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk/resources/guidance/over-the-counter-medicines-and-homely-remedies)
- NHS Health A to Z website: [Health A to Z - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)
- NHS England (2018) Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care guidance: [NHS England » Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs](#)
- PrescQIPP (2014): Care homes – Homely remedies guidance: [B72. Care homes - Homely remedies \(prescqipp.info\)](https://www.prescqipp.info)
- Self Care Forum helping empowering people to practice self-care: [Homepage - Self Care Forum](#)
- To locate a Pharmacy near you: [Find a pharmacy - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

Appendix 1 – Homely Remedy Individual Agreement Form

Care Home Name:	
Resident Name:	

I _____ agree that a suitably trained senior person on duty at _____ may administer the medication I have authorised in this form for the indications stated, at the dose stated and for appropriate patients at _____

This agreement does not remove the requirement that staff involved in the administration of homely remedies must ensure that the medicine to be administered is suitable for the resident’s particular circumstances at the time of administration.

GP or Surgery Pharmacist Agreement	
Please Print Name and Date	
Signature of Care Home Manager/nurse in Charge	
Please Print Name and Date	
Review date:	

The homely remedy should **not be used for longer than 72 hours** (if approved by GP or 48 hours if it has not been pre-approved) without seeking medical attention.

Product	Indication	Adult dose	Maximum daily dose	Additional information	Please indicate which products have been authorised (and annotate those that are excluded)
Gaviscon Advance oral suspension	For the relief of heartburn or indigestion	5 – 10 mls after meals and at bedtime	40mls in divided doses	Sodium and potassium content should be taken into consideration if a highly restricted salt diet is recommended.	
Senna 7.5mg tablets	For the relief of constipation	2 – 4 tablets (usually) at night	4 tablets	May colour urine	
Senna syrup	For the relief of constipation	10 – 20mls (usually) at night	20mls	May colour urine	
Paracetamol 500mg tablets (also caplets & capsules)	For the relief of mild to moderate pain or raised temperature	1 or 2 tablets every 4 to 6 hours, up to a maximum of 8 in 24 hours. Note: Dose varies according to weight.	4g (8 tablets) in divided doses	Do not give with other paracetamol containing products. If body weight < 50kg, dose should be reduced to one tablet up to four times a day.	
Paracetamol 250mg/5ml oral suspension	For the relief of mild to moderate pain or raised temperature	10 – 20mls every 4 – 6 hours, maximum of 4 doses in 24 hours. Note: Dose varies according to weight.	80mls in divided doses	Do not give with other paracetamol containing products. If body weight < 50kg, dose should be reduced to 10mls up to four times a day.	
Simple linctus sugar free	For dry irritating cough	5 – 10 mls up to 4 times a day (suitable for diabetics)	40mls in divided doses	Not suitable for productive coughs.	
Oral rehydration sachets	For treatment of fluid and electrolyte loss associated with acute diarrhoea	One or two reconstituted sachet(s) after each loose motion	20 -40ml/kg	The solution may be refrigerated for up to 24 hours after which it should be discarded.	

Appendix 2 – Homely Remedy Audit Sheet

Name and Strength of Homely Remedy:	
Please use one sheet per product	

Date obtained	Quantity obtained	Date administered to resident	Name of resident homely remedy administered to	Dose administered to resident	Administered by	Balance	Date, quantity and expiry date checked by

N.B. Note some products may have a shorter shelf-life once opened; check the manufacturer’s literature. Please clearly record the date of opening of any bottles.

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