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Over the counter medicines in nurseries and schools

I am writing on behalf of the Medicines Management Team at Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to inform you of changes in the prescribing of over the counter medications which may have an impact upon current medicine administration policies employed at local schools and nurseries in the county.

Shropshire CCG is adopting the national NHS England policy on self-care for self-limiting and minor health conditions. GPs in Shropshire have been advised, and the policy states, it does not support the routine prescribing of medication **for self-limiting or minor conditions (refer Appendix 1) suitable for self-care**.

What does this mean for nurseries and schools?

Parents/Carers should purchase over the counter medicines (rather than requiring a GP to prescribe it), and provide the necessary consent and instructions to the educational provider directly. This national policy states that parents/carers are advised to seek appropriate advice from Pharmacists on minor conditions (such as those listed in Appendix 1) rather than GPs having to prescribe these over the counter medications so that they can be administered to children in your care.

Written permission is required from the child's parent/carer should accompany the purchased medicine –which is consent for the administering of over the counter medications.

Providers can use the Department of Education templates to implement the national policy on self-care medicines. The templates are provided as an aid to schools and their use is entirely voluntary.

Department of Education templates: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>

The templates give example text that schools can use to:

- create and invite parents to contribute to a child's individual healthcare plan
- ask for parental agreement for administering medicine
- keep a record of medicine, dosage and frequency administered to children
- keep a record of staff training in administration of medicines

The CCG is asking all nurseries and schools to implement this change in policy (refer Appendix 2).

Enabling parents/carers to provide over the counter medications and written consent for the treatment of their child's minor health conditions could help to minimise the time spent by GPs on minor conditions, freeing up GP appointments for more serious conditions, and help the NHS to save money to use in other NHS treatments.

Pharmacies are accessible and convenient as many of them are open late and weekends. They can be found in local communities, on the High Street, in some supermarkets and in shopping centres. This allows rapid access and early treatment, rather than delays caused by attending a GP appointment for a prescription. The range of medicines available increases regularly and a Pharmacist would be best placed to give advice on the most appropriate product to use. Many minor ailments are not of a serious nature and will resolve within a short time-frame with the right over the counter treatments.

More information on the recent NHS England's 'Changes to prescribing over the counter medicines' can be found on the NHS England website:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/medicines/items-which-should-not-be-routinely-prescribed/>.

If you have any queries please contact a member of the Medicines Management Team on Tel no: 01743 277557 or Email: shrccg.motqueries@nhs.net

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely



Elizabeth Walker
Head of Medicines Management, Shropshire CCG

Appendix 1

The chart below provides examples of minor conditions that do not require a visit to a GP for a prescribed medication:

Acne (mild)	Hay fever/Seasonal rhinitis (mild to moderate)	Piles
Cold sores of the lip	Haemorrhoids	Ringworm/ Athletes foot
Constipation (infrequent)	Head lice	Scabies
Coughs and colds and nasal congestion	Infant colic	Skin rash
Cradle cap	Indigestion and Heartburn	Sore throat (acute)
Cystitis (mild)	Insect bites and stings	Sun protection
Diarrhoea (adult)	Mouth ulcer (minor)	Sunburn from excessive sun exposure
Dry eyes/Sore tired eye	Migraine (infrequent)	Threadworms
Dandruff	Minor burns and scalds	Teething/Mild toothache
Dry skin (mild)	Vitamins and Minerals (except to treat a clinically proven deficiency)	Toothache
Ear wax	Mild irritant dermatitis	Travel sickness
Eczema (mild)	Nappy rash	Vaginal thrush (Age ≥16)
Eye infection (conjunctivitis Age ≥2)	Oral thrush	Warts and Verrucae
Excessive sweating (mild-moderate Hyperhidrosis)	Period pain	Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and/fever (e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain)
Fungal skin infections	Prevention of dental cavities	Probiotics

Appendix 2

Nurseries

In April 2017, the Department for Education produced the following guidance – “**Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage**. Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five”.

- 3.45. Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, for administering medicines. It must include systems for obtaining information about a child’s needs for medicines, and for keeping this information up-to-date. Training must be provided for staff where the administration of medicine requires medical or technical knowledge. **Prescription medicines must not be administered unless they have been prescribed for a child by a doctor, dentist, nurse or pharmacist** (medicines containing aspirin should only be given if prescribed by a doctor).

This relates to medicines that must be prescribed, not over the counter medicines (paragraph 3.46 makes clear that there are prescription and non-prescription medicines). GPs and other prescribers should not therefore be required to prescribe over the counter medicines (see also 3.46).

- 3.46. Medicine (both **prescription and non-prescription**) must only be administered to a child where written permission for that particular medicine has been obtained from the child’s parent and/or carer. Providers must keep a written record each time a medicine is administered to a child, and inform the child’s parents and/or carers on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

This is clear that administration of non-prescription medicines (over the counter medicines) can be administered following written permission by the child’s parent and/or carer. GPs and other prescribers should not be required to write to confirm that it is appropriate to administer over the counter medicines – parents can provide this consent.

Schools

In December 2015, the Department for Education produced the following guidance – “**Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions. Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England**”

- **Wherever possible, children should be allowed to carry their own medicines and relevant devices or should be able to access their medicines for self-medication quickly and easily.** Children who can take their medicines themselves or manage procedures may require an appropriate level of supervision. If it is not appropriate for a child to self-manage, relevant staff should help to administer medicines and manage procedures for them.

This highlights that children should be allowed to self-medicate wherever possible.

- **No child under 16 should be given prescription or non-prescription medicines without their parent's written consent** – except in exceptional circumstances where the medicine has been prescribed to the child without the knowledge of the parents. In such cases, every effort should be made to encourage the child or young person to involve their parents while respecting their right to confidentiality. **Schools should set out the circumstances in which non-prescription medicines may be administered.**

This is clear that non-prescription medicines (over the counter medicines) can be administered following written permission by the child's parent. GPs and other prescribers should not be required to write to confirm that it is appropriate to administer over the counter medicines – parents can provide this consent.

- Schools should only accept prescribed medicines if these are in-date, labelled, provided in the original container as dispensed by a pharmacist and include instructions for administration, dosage and storage. The exception to this is insulin, which must still be in date, but will generally be available to schools inside an insulin pen or a pump, rather than in its original container

This relates to where prescribed medicines are managed by the school, not over the counter medicines (the paragraph above makes clear that there are prescription and non-prescription medicines). GPs and other prescribers should not therefore be required to prescribe over the counter medicines.