

Guidance on Over The Counter (OTC) medicines for self-care

The Medicines Act 1968 categorises medicines into Prescription Only (POM), Pharmacy (P) and General Sales List (GSL). The latter 2 groups are commonly known as Over The Counter (OTC) medicines as they can be bought without the need for a prescription and are therefore pertinent to self-care.

N.B. The same medicine may be categorised as GSL, P and POM depending on packsize and may have slightly differing licensed indications.

Listed below are examples of GSL and P medicines commonly available to buy as part of self-care. The prices may vary so are not included but a price range denoted by stars where 1 star is <£1/pack, 2 stars £1-£3/pack, 3 stars £3.01-£5/pack, 4 stars £5.01-£8.40/pack (the upper limit being the current NHS prescription charge for one item) and 5 stars >£8.40. **This is not an exhaustive list, but illustrates the price difference that exists between generic and branded medicines. Patients should be instructed to request a generic where possible. Those preparations in bold are included in the Pharmacy First scheme:**

Condition	Name	Pack size	Price range/ pack
Pain/fever	Paracetamol 500mg tablets	32	*
	Paracetamol 120mg/5ml SF suspension	100ml	**
	Paracetamol 250mg/5ml SF suspension	100ml	**
	Paracetamol 500mg capsules	32	**
	Paracetamol 500mg soluble tablets	24	***
	Co-codamol 8/500 tablets	32	**
	Ibuprofen 200mg tablets	16	*
	Ibuprofen 400mg tablets	24/48/84	**/**/***
	Ibuprofen 100mg/5ml suspension	100ml	**
	Fenbid 5% gel (ibuprofen)	100g	***
	Ibuleve 5% gel (ibuprofen)	30g	***
	Ibuleve extra strength 10% gel (ibuprofen)	30g	****
	Voltarol 1% gel (diclofenac)	30g	****
	Aspirin 300mg tablets	32	**
Solpadeine Plus tablets/capsules (paracetamol, codeine and caffeine)	32	****	
Migraine	Migraleve Duo tablets (paracetamol, codeine and buclizine)	12	****
	Migraleve Pink tablets (paracetamol, codeine and buclizine)	12	****
	Migraleve Yellow tablets (paracetamol and codeine)	12	**
	Co-codamol 8/500 tablets	32	**
Insomnia	Nyctol original tablets (diphenhydramine 25mg)	20	***
	Nyctol herbal	30	***

Hay fever	Cetirizine 10mg tablets	30	*
	Cetirizine 1mg/1ml SF solution	200ml	**
	Zirtek Allergy 1mg/ml SF solution	70ml/150ml	***/*
	Beclometasone 0.05% nasal spray	180 dose	***
	Beconase nasal spray 100/180 doses	100/180 dose	****/*
	Pirinase Hayfever 0.05% nasal spray (Fluticasone)	60 dose	****
	Sodium cromoglicate 2% eye drops	13.5ml	***
	Opticrom 2% eye drops	5ml/10ml	***/*
Insect bites and stings	Eurax cream	30g	***
	Hydrocortisone 1% cream	15g	**
	HC45 1% cream (hydrocortisone)	15g	***
Cough	Benlyn Chesty Cough Non-Drowsy (guaifenesin and levomenthol)	150/300ml	****/*
	Simple Linctus	200ml	**
Colds/flu	Beecham's Max Strength sachets	10	****
	Beecham's Max Strength tablets	16	***
	Otomize nasal spray	10ml	***
	Day Nurse capsules	20	****
	Night Nurse capsules	10	***
	Olbas Oil	10ml	***
	Sinex nasal spray	20ml	****
	Menthol & Eucalyptus inhalation	100ml	***
Sore throat	Strepsils	16	***
	Dequadin lozenges	20	**
	Difflam rinse	200ml	****
	Difflam spray	30ml	****
Heartburn and indigestion	Rennie tablets	24	***
	Gaviscon liquid	300ml	****
	Gaviscon tablets	16	**
	Gaviscon Advance suspension	250ml	***
	Pepto-Bismal suspension	120ml	**
	Maalox plus suspension	180ml	***
	Windeze	30	***
	Zantac 75mg tablets (ranitidine)	12	***
Zanprol 10mg tablets (omeprazole)	14	****	
Irritable Bowel Syndrome	Buscopan IBS relief tablets	20	***
	Colpermin IBS relief tablets	20	****
Diarrhoea	Dioralyte sachets	6	***
	Imodium instants	12	****
	Loperamide 2mg capsules	12	***
Constipation	Fybogel Hi-Fibre sachets	10	***
	Lactulose liquid	200ml	***
	Senna tablets	60	***
	Senokot tablets	20	**
	Senokot liquid	150ml	***
Haemorrhoids	Anusol cream	23g	***
	Anusol suppositories	12	***
	Germaloids cream	55g	****
Nausea	Buccastem M tablets	8	****
Colic	Infacol liquid	30ml	***

Threadworms	Ovex chewable tablets	1 (single)/4 (family pack)	***/*
	Ovex suspension	30ml (family pack)	****
Urinary Tract Infection	Potassium citrate liquid	200ml	**
Bacterial conjunctivitis	Optrex infected eye	10ml	****
	Brolene	10ml	****
Cold sores	Lypsyl Cold Sore Gel	3g	***
	Lipsore cream (aciclovir)	2g	**
	Zovirax cream (aciclovir)	2g	****
Fungal infections	Clotrimazole 1% cream	20g/50g	**/*
	Canesten 1% cream	50g	****
	Clotrimazole 2% cream	20g	****
	Clotrimazole 500mg pessary	1	***
	Canesten 500mg pessary	1	*****
	Canesten 10% internal cream	5g	*****
	Canesten Duo 500mg pessary & 2% cream 10g	1/1	*****
Headlice	Derbac M lotion	50ml	****
	Full Marks solution	100ml	****
	Hedrin 4% lotion	50ml	****
Scabies	Lyclear 5% cream	30g	*****
Warts and verrucas	Salactol wart paint	10ml	**
Acne vulgaris	Acnecide 5% topical aqueous gel	60g	*****
Eczema and dermatitis	Hydrocortisone 1% cream	15g	**
	Eumovate 0.05% eczema and dermatitis cream	15g	****
Dandruff	Selsun shampoo	150ml	****
	Nizoral anti-dandruff 2% shampoo	60ml/100ml	****/*
Ear wax	Otex olive oil	10ml	***
	Otex ear drops	8ml	***
Nappy rash	Metanium ointment	80g	****
Food supplementation (where MUST score <2)	Complan sachets (sweet)	4	***
	Complan sachets (savory)	4	****
Coeliac Disease	The range of gluten free foods is too wide to list but available from pharmacies, health food shops and supermarkets		
Vitamins	The range of vitamins is too wide to list but available from pharmacies, health food shops and supermarkets		
	The Nottinghamshire APC Vitamin D guidelines recommend patients can buy single vitamin D supplements at most pharmacies and supermarkets for less than £3 for a three month supply. Women and children who qualify for the Healthy Start scheme can get free supplements containing the recommended amounts of vitamin D. NHS choices website can provide additional		

	<p>information for people. Products available over the counter are suitable for replacement/maintenance doses as well as for prophylaxis in winter if required.</p>		
Emollients	<p>The Nottinghamshire APC Emollient Formulary at: http://www.nottsapc.nhs.uk/media/1178/emollient-formulary.pdf?UNLID=2723392120173911553 gives advice on recommending and prescribing of emollients so clinical need to receive a prescription over advice to buy OTC is relevant in the context of degree of skin dryness, association with a medical condition as opposed to natural drying of the skin in centrally heated buildings in winter etc.</p>		

General notes

- **The same medicine may be categorised as GSL, P and POM depending on pack-size and may have slightly different licensed indications, different recommended doses and be used in different groups of people.**
- People can buy general sale medicine (GSL) packs from retail outlets such as corner shops and supermarkets and self-selection shelves in pharmacies. General sale medicines are taken for a limited range of common, easily recognised ailments which usually last around 2–3 days. Each pack therefore only contains a few doses. These medicines cause few troublesome side effects in normal use.
- Pharmacy medicines can only be bought in a Pharmacy under the supervision of a Pharmacist. They can be used at higher doses, for longer duration and in a wider range of different groups of people. Pharmacy medicine packs are generally for short term treatment of medical conditions that can be identified readily and are not likely to persist, **although they may sometimes be available for the management of long term conditions**. Pharmacy medicines need to be used more carefully than medicines sold in other retail outlets and people may require special advice on treatment.
- Paracetamol and aspirin in non-effervescent tablet or capsule form can be bought in quantities of up to 100 under a Pharmacist's supervision. This provides extra flexibility for a person who may wish to self-treat at a higher dose and/ or longer duration and requires more than 32 tablets. There are no legal limits on the quantity of over the counter effervescent tablet, granule, powder and liquid preparations of paracetamol and aspirin that can be sold to a person at any one time but Pharmacists will exercise professional judgement on what quantity to supply.