

Position statement on the prescribing of treatment for hay fever / seasonal rhinitis

As part of its self-care strategy, in line with National Guidance, NHS Mansfield and Ashfield and NHS Newark and Sherwood Clinical Commissioning Groups no longer supports the prescribing of antihistamines, nasal sprays and eye drops for the treatment of hay fever / seasonal rhinitis on prescription.

Patients should be advised to purchase these products over the counter (OTC).

Recommendations:

- All patients currently prescribed a treatment for hay fever / seasonal rhinitis should be reviewed with a view to stopping prescribing and recommending an OTC product for self-care.
- Prescribers should advise patients on safe and effective self-care measures, directing them to appropriate sources of information (e.g. [NHS Choices](#) and [The Self Care Forum](#)) and using patient information leaflets if appropriate.
- Consider prescribing if:
 - Allergic symptoms are severe and have not responded to various OTC medication or trigger avoidance.
 - There is a licensing restriction on the sale of OTC medication. This can be checked using the summary of product characteristics, available at www.medicines.org.uk
 - The patient has chronic symptoms which require treatment throughout the year.
- Clinical judgement should be used when considering whether it is acceptable to ask a patient to purchase their medication. See the full National Guidelines (link listed below) for general exceptions to self-care.

Rationale:

The National Guidance recommends that prescriptions to treat mild to moderate hay fever should not be routinely offered as the condition is appropriate for self-care.

- Hay fever is a common allergic condition that affects up to one in five people.
- The severity of symptoms can vary, some people need medication to manage their symptoms and others can manage their condition by avoiding triggers. If symptomatic treatment is needed, a wide range of medications can be purchased from community pharmacies and supermarkets.
- These medications are usually cheaper than a prescription and can be purchased without seeing a GP.

Any patient queries or complaints should be directed to the CCGs Patient Engagement Team on 0800 028 3693; email NSHCCG.Pet-North@nhs.net or in writing to Patient Experience Team, NHS Newark and Sherwood Clinical Commissioning Group, Balderton Primary Care Centre, Lowfield Lane, Balderton, Nottinghamshire NG24 3HJ

References

1. PrescQIPP B84 Antihistamines and hay fever
<https://www.prescqipp.info/resources/category/143-self-care-hayfever>
2. NHS England, NHS Clinical Commissioners. Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in Primary Care: Guidance for CCGs. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs/> (accessed April 2018)