

# Available Without Prescription campaign toolkit

Raising awareness of the treatments for minor health conditions available to patients at a pharmacy or supermarket, without needing a prescription.

27/03/26 V1

## Introduction

NHS England guidance now states it does not support prescribing of medicines for health conditions that can be purchased at a pharmacy or supermarket.

Following a period of consultation with prescribers and the general public, the ICB's Medicines Optimisation Team has produced a series of resources to help you with conversations with patients in order to reduce prescribing in this area.

Alongside this activity, we will be launching communications to the public to raise awareness of the availability of treatments that can be bought without prescription. This campaign has been developed following a period of insight with people across the North East and North Cumbria and has been designed to encourage positive behaviour change in this area.

## About the toolkit

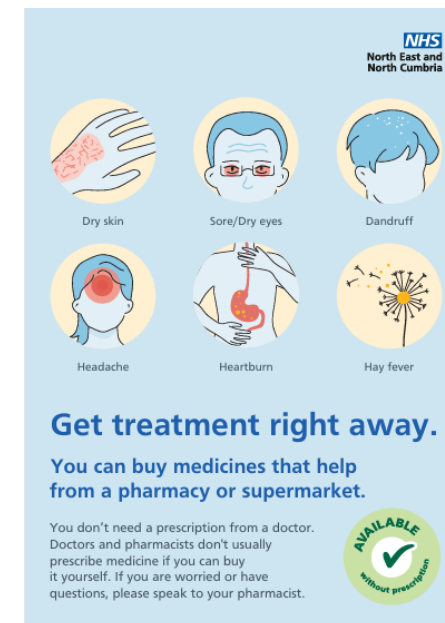
This toolkit provides a brief overview of the campaign and the resources available to you. It includes key messages, newsletter items, links to patient-facing materials and social media posts for you to customise and use in your comms and engagement work.

Page numbers for the individual sections can be found below:

Key messages | [page 3](#)

Bulletin / Newsletter items | [page 4](#)

Social media posts | [page 6](#)



## Promotional Material

A range of promotional materials, including posters, digital display screens, and social media graphics, are available to download from the Campaign Hub website ([nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk](https://nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk)).

For further information please contact [victoriacasey@nhs.net](mailto:victoriacasey@nhs.net)

## Key messages

**Available Without Prescription - Raising awareness of the treatments for minor health conditions available to patients at a pharmacy or supermarket, without needing a prescription.**

### Patient website - [Common health conditions? | North East and North Cumbria NHS](#)

- The NHS England guidance states that it does not support routine prescribing of medicines for minor health conditions where self-care is the most appropriate route.
- These conditions can be treated effectively and safely using medicines available from pharmacies, supermarkets and other retail outlets, often at a lower cost than that which would be incurred by the NHS or at a cost less than the prescription charge.
- By reducing spend on these products, resources can be used for other higher priority areas that will have greater impact for patients. This includes supporting improvements in services or delivering transformation that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the NHS.
- This campaign starts by asking patients to reflect on what symptoms they are experiencing, and then leads with the positive message that they can buy medicines that help from a pharmacy or supermarket. The campaign aims to educate patients on what can be treated without requiring a trip to the doctors or by medicines requiring a prescription, and to encourage patients to go to a supermarket or pharmacy as a first step. The call to action is to speak to a pharmacist if they have any questions, or visit the campaign information web page for more information.
- As part of the GP practice toolkit, we've developed a prescribers reference guide. This digital tool outlines a list of treatments for minor conditions that can be bought by the patient. Please see below.

**Prescribers reference guide – <https://nencswatchdev.wpenginepowered.com/> (for internal use only, not to be shared with patients)**

Developed after consultation with prescribers, this digital tool contains information about treatments for minor conditions that are available to buy in a pharmacy or shop, and includes information about their associated cost and age suitability. It is designed as a tool to support patient consultations where self-care is the most suitable treatment option. This guide also includes information specific for patients with children, and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding (including the Healthy Start scheme).

**Please note:** We have worked hard to ensure that all information provided is accurate at the time of publication and that you have all of the detail needed to be able to address any patient concerns. However, it is of course up to the prescriber to ensure that each patient has been medically reviewed, and it is safe/appropriate for the patient to purchase these recommended treatments. These resources are for use for common or minor conditions. Long-term conditions, more complex forms of minor illness and treating a side effect of a prescription medicine or symptom of another illness may not be included.

## Suggested bulletin/newsletter copy

### **Common health conditions? Treatments are available without a prescription.**

NHS England guidance states that it does not support routine prescribing of medicines for minor health conditions where self-care is the most appropriate route.

Patients can get quick relief for many minor health conditions from their local pharmacy or supermarket; no prescription is needed.

These conditions can be treated effectively and safely using medicines available from pharmacies, supermarkets and other retail outlets, often at a lower cost than that which would be incurred by the NHS or at a cost less than the prescription charge.

### **About the campaign**

This campaign starts by asking patients to reflect on what symptoms they are experiencing and then leads with the positive message that they can buy medicines that help from a pharmacy or supermarket. The campaign aims to educate patients on what can be treated without requiring a trip to the doctors or by medicines requiring a prescription, and to encourage patients to go to a supermarket or pharmacy as a first step.

These common conditions include:

- Aches and sprains
- Period pain
- Back pain
- Occasional constipation
- Piles (haemorrhoids)
- Diarrhoea
- Indigestion and heartburn
- Mild dry skin or sunburn
- Mild acne

- Hay fever and mild allergies
- Fungal infections (such as ringworm or athlete's foot)
- Dry or sore eyes
- Conjunctivitis
- Dandruff and cradle cap
- The supply of vitamins and mineral supplements

The call to action is to speak to a pharmacist if they have any questions, or visit the campaign information web page for more information.

By reducing spend on these products, resources can be used for other higher priority areas that will have greater impact for patients.

The public-facing website can be found at: [Common health conditions? | North East and North Cumbria NHS](#)

### **How can you support the campaign?**

We want to ensure that patients have the information to understand which minor health conditions can be treated by self-care, and not by requiring treatment prescribed by a doctor. This will free up unnecessary GP appointments and will also ensure the patients get the right treatment quicker. You can support the campaign by sharing the campaign resources across your channels where patients will see them.

There's a range of campaign resources available to download at:

[nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk](https://nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk)

- **Digital screen adverts**
- **A4 posters**
- **Social media graphics**

## Social media posts

Please tag us in your social media posts

Use **#AvailableWithoutPrescription**

**Facebook** - NorthEastandNorthCumbriaNHS

**X** – @NENC\_NHS

**Instagram** – nenc\_nhs

**TikTok** - @nenc\_icb

**Linked-In** - @north-east-and-north-cumbria-nhs

**YouTube** - North East and North Cumbria NHS

Below we have written some sample posts for social media channels, including Facebook and X (formally known as Twitter). Please note that these are to be accompanied by the relevant campaign social graphics which can be downloaded from the Campaign Hub website ([nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk](https://nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk)).

Condition	Post text:	Accompanying graphic:
Dry/sore eyes	<p>If you have dry or sore eyes there are treatments you can buy in a pharmacy or supermarket to help relieve these, no prescription needed.</p> <p>Speak to your pharmacist for advice and support.</p> <p>For more information visit <a href="https://www.available-without-prescription.co.uk">www.available-without-prescription.co.uk</a></p>	

Dry skin	<p>Get dry skin relief today from your local pharmacy or supermarket, no prescription required.</p> <p>For more information visit <a href="http://www.available-without-prescription.co.uk">www.available-without-prescription.co.uk</a></p>	
Dandruff	<p>If you have an itchy scalp or dandruff, a GP or nurse won't give you a prescription for symptoms that can be easily treated with medicines available in a pharmacy or supermarket.</p> <p>For more information visit <a href="http://www.available-without-prescription.co.uk">www.available-without-prescription.co.uk</a></p>	
Indigestion	<p>Got indigestion or heartburn?</p> <p>Get treatment right away from your local pharmacy or supermarket.</p> <p>No prescription needed.</p> <p>For more information visit <a href="http://www.available-without-prescription.co.uk">www.available-without-prescription.co.uk</a></p>	

Constipation	<p>If you have infrequent constipation, there are treatments you can buy in a pharmacy, local shop or supermarket to help relieve the symptoms.</p> <p>For more information visit <a href="http://www.available-without-prescription.co.uk">www.available-without-prescription.co.uk</a></p>	
Hay fever	<p>Itchy eyes? Sneezing? Headache?</p> <p>If you have hay fever symptoms, you can get treatment right away from your local pharmacy or supermarket.</p> <p>No prescription needed.</p> <p>For more information visit <a href="http://www.available-without-prescription.co.uk">www.available-without-prescription.co.uk</a></p>	

**Patient facing:** For further information on any of the campaigns please contact [victoriacasey@nhs.net](mailto:victoriacasey@nhs.net)