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Look after Yourself

You can treat many common minor illnesses and injuries at home.

A Guide to Self-care



EMC & SMC
PPGS

Self care PIL 181205.docx

NHS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Most of the text in this booklet is taken from NHS sources e.g. the website. When appropriate, the exact source is given.

1. SELF-CARE – QUICK AND EFFECTIVE

Common health complaints, such as coughs, colds & headaches, account for one out of every five GP appointments in England. Many of these can be treated quicker and just as effectively at home using self-care, advice from your pharmacist and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines bought from pharmacies or supermarkets. The aim of this booklet is to help patients with self-care. This complements an introductory leaflet on self-care awareness recently prepared by the Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Groups (available from nhsstaywellderbyshire.co.uk).

Self-care encompasses the things individuals can do to protect their health and manage illness. Self care does not mean that you need to manage on your own without any help from a health professional. This booklet identifies some of the different sources of support available. **If you are at all unsure, please seek advice from your GP, nurse or pharmacist.** There are different types of self-care e.g.

- Self-care for minor illnesses;
- Life-style changes and maintenance; and
- Managing long term conditions.

This booklet concentrates on self-care of minor illnesses and shows where to get good advice on how to safely administer self-treatment. It should be used in conjunction with the advice leaflets identified in Section 3 which are downloadable from the internet or available from reception. However, for further assistance, some useful links to advice on mental health and general self-care and well-being are also provided.

2. HOW YOUR PHARMACIST CAN HELP YOU

Pharmacists are experts in the use of medicines and are able to diagnose and offer treatment immediately for a range of minor illnesses and ailments, without the need to make a doctor's appointment. They are open long hours, at weekends and evenings and can be found on the local high street and in supermarkets. Instead of booking an appointment with your GP, you can see your local pharmacist any time by just walking in. Many pharmacies will have a secluded area where you can discuss your concerns in private. Pharmacists can also advise you when you should seek further medical assistance.

Pharmacists can give advice, or where appropriate, medicines that can help to clear up the problem and offer a range of branded or non-branded medicines. If you have any questions about any medicines, they would be happy to talk to you. In particular, **to avoid dangerous drug-drug interactions**, you should consult a pharmacist before you take prescription medicines and over-the-counter preparations at the same time. People who have chronic disorders should also consult a pharmacist. OTC drugs are

not designed to treat serious disorders and can make some disorders worse. **An unanticipated reaction, such as a rash or insomnia, is a signal to stop taking the OTC drug immediately and obtain medical advice.**

Pharmacists are ready to give advice on the best treatment for minor conditions such as:

- mild skin conditions, such as acne, eczema, psoriasis, impetigo, athlete's foot
- coughs and colds, including blocked nose (nasal congestion), and sore throats
- bruises, sunburn, and minor burns & scalds
- constipation and piles (haemorrhoids)
- hay fever, dry eyes and allergies (including rashes, bites and stings)
- aches and pains, including earache, headache, migraine, back pain and toothache
- vomiting, heartburn, indigestion, diarrhoea and threadworms
- period pain, thrush and cystitis
- head lice (nits)
- conjunctivitis, cold sores and mouth ulcers
- warts and verrucas
- nappy rash and teething.

Section 3 on ADVICE ON SAFE SELF-TREATMENT indicates how you can obtain information leaflets on most of these conditions.

MAKE SURE YOU ORDER YOUR REPEAT PRESCRIPTION

If you or someone you care for requires medicines regularly, make sure you order and collect repeat prescriptions in good time. Many of the calls to out of hours health services are for emergency repeat prescriptions when people have run out of their medication – a situation that can be avoided with some forethought and planning. By thinking ahead about your regular medication, you are helping our busy doctors and nurses.

Repeat medication can be requested via:

- a pharmacy who will ask for it on your behalf;
- nomination of a pharmacy to which your approved prescription will be sent electronically (known as EPS);
- patient online services;
- reception - by dropping in your repeat medication slip.

Repeat prescription slips will normally be available for collection from the surgery after two working days and available at a nominated chemist within three working days.

3. ADVICE LEAFLETS ON SAFE SELF-TREATMENT OF MINOR ILLNESSES

If you are to safely administer self-care you need to know:

- about the symptoms so you know what to expect;
- what you can do to help yourself get better;
- **when to seek medical help**; and
- where to find out more.

There are a wide variety of sources of information available. The Self Care Forum (SCF) (www.selfcareforum.org) and the Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Groups (DCCGs) (www.nhsstaywellederbyshire.co.uk) provide advice sheets which answer the above questions. If the one you want is not there, search NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk/conditions/) for it. As not everyone has access to the internet, the practices are prepared to print the advice leaflets out for you. The fact sheets have been collated in booklets as follows:

EYE, EAR & THROAT: conjunctivitis, dry eyes, ear wax, middle ear infection & sore throat.

GASTRO-INTESTINAL SYSTEM: constipation, diarrhoea, haemorrhoids, heartburn & indigestion.

INFECTIONS OR INFESTATIONS: athlete's foot, cold sores, fungal nail infections, head lice, fever in children & threadworms.

ACHES, PAINS & TRAVEL SICKNESS: back pain, headaches & migraines, sprains & strains, teething & travel sickness.

RESPIRATORY SYSTEM: cough, colds & nasal congestion, hayfever & sinusitis.

SKIN CONDITIONS: acne, cradle cap, dandruff, eczema, excessive sweating, minor burns & scalds, warts & verrucas.

URINARY TRACT: mild cystitis, urine symptoms in men.

Ask for those booklets that are relevant to your condition at Reception.

4. USEFUL REFERENCE BOOKS

Not everybody has access to the internet. There are some very useful reference books that can be purchased or borrowed from a library. Some of those found useful by patients are:

- Take Care of Yourself, J Fries & D Vickery – this provides an illustrated guide to self-care with the flags to indicate when you should seek professional advice;

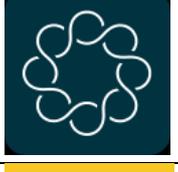
- The British Medical Association Complete Family Health Guide – this provides information on symptoms and disorders. Symptoms are analysed in charts that give guidance on self-help and when to see a doctor.
- The British Medical Association New Guide to Medicines and Drugs – this provides information and practical advice on drugs and medicines in a way that can be readily understood by a non-medical reader.

5. APPS FOR SMART PHONES AND TABLETS

The NHS Apps Library beta was launched in April 2017 to help patients make better choices about the digital health and care tools they use. To begin with, the library has a small selection of tools that meet the high standard of quality, safety and effectiveness people expect from the NHS. It also offers patients and the public the opportunity to tell the NHS what they think about the apps. The full app library is available at www.digital.nhs.uk/services/nhs-apps-library.

Use of the tools / apps presented in the library are not intended to be a substitute for a consultation with a healthcare professional. It is up to you to contact a healthcare professional if you are concerned about your health.

Some of the free, more general use apps (available from the Play stores) listed are:

	<p>The British Red Cross Baby and Child First Aid app provides simple, easy-to-learn skills to help a baby or child in a first aid emergency.</p>
	<p>The British Red Cross First Aid app features simple, easy-to-learn skills for a range of first aid situations.</p>
	<p>Health Help Now will help you find the right treatment for your health needs whatever the time, wherever you are.</p>
	<p>Echo helps you order and manage your NHS repeat prescriptions. It also reminds you when and how to take your medicines.</p>
	<p>Stress & Anxiety Companion helps you handle stress and anxiety on-the-go. Tools like breathing exercises, relaxing music and games are designed to calm the mind. The app helps you change negative thoughts to help you better cope with life's ups and downs.</p>



The **Student Health App** provides easy access to more than 900 pages of reliable health information all in one place. The content has been created for university students by NHS doctors and is regularly updated.

Another app, not in the NHS app library, recommended by the Derbyshire CCGs is HANDi Taunton.



HANDi Taunton has been developed by the Paediatric team at Musgrove Park Hospital to provide expert support to parents/carers and medical professionals looking after children with the most common childhood illnesses (Diarrhoea (Gastroenteritis), Chesty Baby (Bronchiolitis), Chesty Child (Wheeze and Asthma), High temperature, Abdominal Pain & Common new born problems

Please note that apps are being added or taken away from the library all the time and so you should check the website to see the current recommendations.

6. ONLINE CONSULTATIONS IN GENERAL PRACTICE

A growing number of services are offering GP consultations online, most commonly via smartphone apps. Whilst many of these are private, some have developed partnerships with GP Practices in order to deliver NHS care. The Royal College of General Practitioners has published a list of questions to consider before using online general practice services. The list can be downloaded from <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/-/media/Files/Policy/A-Z-policy/2018/RCGP-online-consultations-questions-to-ask-march-2018.ashx?la=en>.

There are questions:

- to ensure that the service is safe e.g. Will the online provider have access to my GP records so that they know about my medical history?
- about the services available e.g. Is it possible to get a physical examination if I need or want one? How far will I have to travel in order to be examined?
- about how the service is provided e.g. Is a free NHS service being offered or will I have to pay for it? If I have to pay, how much and what payment schemes are available?

If you are to safely use an online GP service, you should seek answers to all the questions posed.

7. WHICH MEDICINES SHOULD YOU KEEP AT HOME

Even minor illness and ailments – such as colds, headaches or diarrhoea – can disrupt your life and make you feel grotty. You can be prepared for most common ailments by keeping a well-stocked medicine cabinet at home and feel better in a couple of days without the need to see a doctor. The British Medical Association New Guide to Medicines and Drugs provides information and practical advice on drugs and medicines in a way that can be readily understood by a non-medical reader.

NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/your-medicine-cabinet/) provides the list below, recommended by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, of medicines that will help you deal with most minor ailments.

Pain relief: Painkillers like aspirin, paracetamol and ibuprofen are highly effective at relieving most minor aches and pains, such as headaches and period pain. These medicines also help with some minor ailments, such as the common cold, by reducing aches, pain and high temperatures. Paracetamol, aspirin and ibuprofen also help reduce the inflammation seen in arthritis and sprains.

Bear in mind:

- aspirin mustn't be given to children under 16
- ibuprofen must be taken with caution if you have certain conditions, such as asthma – check with your pharmacist if in doubt
- pregnant women shouldn't take ibuprofen – visit the bumps website (<http://www.medicinesinpregnancy.org/>) to find out more about taking medicines when you're pregnant

Antihistamines: These are useful for dealing with allergies and insect bites. They're also helpful if you have hay fever. Antihistamines can come in the form of creams you apply to the skin (topical antihistamine) or tablets you swallow (oral antihistamine). Antihistamine creams soothe insect stings and bites, and rashes and itching from stinging nettles. Antihistamine tablets help control hay fever symptoms and calm minor allergic reactions to food. They can also help calm itchiness during chickenpox. Some antihistamines may cause drowsiness. Ask your pharmacist about this as there are some antihistamines that don't cause drowsiness.

Oral rehydration salts: Fever, diarrhoea and vomiting make us lose water and essential minerals and can lead to dehydration. Oral rehydration salts, available at pharmacies, are an easy way to help restore your body's natural balance of minerals and fluid and help your recovery. But they don't fight the cause of your illness, such as a virus or bacteria.

Anti-diarrhoea tablets: Diarrhoea is caused by a range of things, such as food poisoning or a stomach virus, and can happen without warning. It's a good idea to keep an anti-diarrhoea medicine at home. Anti-diarrhoea remedies can quickly control the symptoms of diarrhoea, although they don't deal with the underlying cause. The most common anti-diarrhoeal is loperamide, sold under the names Imodium, Arret and Diasorb, among others. It works by slowing down the action of your gut. Don't give

anti-diarrhoea medicines to children under 12 as they may have undesirable side effects. Speak to your GP or pharmacist for advice about a child with these symptoms.

Indigestion treatment: If you have stomach ache or heartburn, a simple antacid will reduce stomach acidity and bring relief. Antacids come as chewable tablets, tablets that dissolve in water, or in liquid form.

Sunscreen: Keep a sun lotion of at least factor 15. Even fairly brief exposure to the sun can cause sunburn and increase your risk of skin cancer. Ensure your sunscreen provides UVA protection. You can protect yourself against the sun further by wearing a hat and sunglasses, and by avoiding the sun during the hottest part of the day between 11am and 3pm.

MEDICINE SAFETY

When keeping medicines at home, remember:

- always **follow the directions** on medicine packets and information leaflets, and never take more than the stated dose
- always **keep medicines out of the sight** and **reach** of children – a high, lockable cupboard in a cool, dry place is ideal
- regularly **check the expiry dates** on a medicine – if a medicine is past its use-by date, don't use it or throw it away: take it to your pharmacy, where it can be disposed of safely.

If you have questions about any medicines or you want to buy them, ask your local pharmacist.

8. FIRST AID KIT

A well-prepared first aid kit can help treat minor cuts, sprains and bruises, and reduce the risk of cuts becoming infected. It should contain at least the following items:

- **bandages** – these can support injured limbs, such as a sprained wrist, and also apply direct pressure to larger cuts before being treated in hospital
- **plasters** – a range of sizes, waterproof if possible
- **thermometer** – digital thermometers that you put in your mouth produce very accurate readings; an under-arm thermometer or an ear thermometer are good ways to read a baby or young child's temperature
- **antiseptic** – this can be used to clean cuts before they're bandaged, and most can treat a range of conditions, including insect stings, ulcers and pimples; alcohol-free antiseptic wipes are useful to clean cuts
- **eyewash solution** – this will help wash out grit or dirt in the eyes
- **sterile dressings** – larger injuries should be covered with a sterile dressing to prevent infection until treatment can be given by a health professional

- **medical tape** – this is used to stick dressings on the skin and can also be used to tape an injured finger to an uninjured one, creating a makeshift splint
- **tweezers** – for taking out splinters; if splinters are left in, they can cause discomfort and become infected

The St John Ambulance First Aid Manual provides a good guide on how to use these. St. John Ambulance (general and cyclists) and the Red Cross (adults and children) also provide free apps available from the various app stores:



9. VACCINATIONS

You can look after yourself by making sure you have all the vaccinations you need. Vaccines are among the safest medicines and the benefits of vaccinations far outweigh the risk of side effects. When you're considering a vaccination for yourself or your child, it's natural to focus on the potential side effects. But a better approach is to try to balance the benefits of having a vaccine against the chances of harm.

Some vaccinations are provided free on the NHS, but you will have to pay for others.

Childhood vaccinations: All your child's routine vaccinations are free of charge. This includes all vaccines recommended from birth to the age of 18. For more information, see the NHS vaccination schedule (www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vaccinations/Pages/vaccination-schedule-age-checklist.aspx).

Flu vaccine: The annual flu vaccine is offered free of charge to:

- young children
- pregnant women
- anyone aged 65 and older
- anyone with an increased risk of serious complications from flu.

Shingles vaccine: A vaccine to prevent shingles, a painful skin disease, is available free of charge for people in their 70s.

Pneumococcal vaccine: The pneumococcal vaccine which protects against infections such as pneumonia and septicaemia (blood poisoning) is one of the free childhood vaccinations but it's also offered free to adults at higher risk of developing a serious health condition from a pneumococcal infection.

Travel vaccinations: Some travel vaccines, such as cholera and typhoid vaccines, are generally free, but you will have to pay for others such as yellow fever vaccination.

10. MENTAL HEALTH SELF-HELP TECHNIQUES

The Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS trust www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp/ (search for ntw selfhelp) provide a useful library of self-help leaflets on the more mental health related issues e.g:

- Abuse
- Alcohol and you
- Anxiety
- Controlling anger
- Depression and low mood
- Depression and low mood: A Guide for Partners
- Domestic violence
- Eating disorders
- Food for thought
- Health anxiety
- Hearing voices and disturbing beliefs
- Obsessions and compulsions
- Panic
- Post Traumatic Stress
- Post natal depression
- Self harm
- Social anxiety
- Sleeping problems
- Stress

The guides are meant as an introduction to self-help techniques. Some people may need to seek additional support from a health professional. The practices are unable to print out these leaflets for you but you can download a free app (search for ntw self help) from the Play stores which gives you ready access on a smartphone or tablet.



Self Help

Northumberland, Tyne and
Wear NHS Foundation Trust
Medical

USEFUL WEBSITES RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

The following websites provide useful information on mental health problems:

www.bigwhitewall.com Free to register for anyone in North Derbyshire, can really help for those with common mental health problems such as anxiety or depression.

www.childbereavementuk.org Help and support for families who have a child that has died or is dying or when a child is facing bereavement. Ph. 0800 02 888 40

www.mind.org.uk Everything you need to know about mental health issues including information on conditions and treatment options. Ph. 0300 123 3393

www.samaritans.org If something is troubling you, contact Samaritans via their website. Ph. 116 123

www.youngminds.org.uk We're the UK's leading charity fighting for children and young people's mental health. We will make sure all young people get the best possible mental health. Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544

11. FINDING RELIABLE HEALTH INFORMATION

Whilst there are vast amounts of medical information on the internet that can help you make informed decisions about your healthcare; some information is of variable quality and intent. NHS Choices have compiled a short guide on finding reliable sources of health care information on the internet www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/digital-inclusion/pages/get-online-take-control-of-your-health.aspx (search for get online take control of your health).

NHS CHOICES

NHS Choices gives:

- Information on adopting healthy life styles e.g. losing weight, getting fit, stopping smoking;
- Simple, interactive tools to help you make the transition towards a healthier lifestyle;
- Details of immunisation and screening programmes which may help to prevent illness or detect problems at an early stage;
- Treatment of minor ailments not covered in the Self Care Forum, nhsstaywellderbyshire or NTW NHS leaflets.

The NHS Choices [symptom checker](#) lets you select your symptoms and then answer some interactive questions about how you are feeling. The site is at www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Pages/BodyMap.aspx?Index hub.aspx (search for nhs health a-z). and provides you with a Health A-Z of conditions and treatments. After answering

the questions, the website then advises you what to do next, e.g. see your GP or seek emergency care. The service is similar to that provided by the 111 telephone helpline.

USE OF WEBSITES

In general, you should (go online for the full NHS Choices guide):

- Cross-check the information. If the same details are repeated across many different websites, there's a greater likelihood of the information being accurate;
- Be wary of scams;
- Be wary of websites offering miracle cures. If something appears too good to be true, then it probably is;
- Be wary of buying medicines online from unregistered pharmacies.

WHICH WEBSITES ARE THE MOST TRUSTWORTHY?

When looking for a trustworthy website, NHS Choices (go online for full guide) suggest the following:

- When looking for advice on specific conditions, look for well-known organisations and charities, such as NHS Choices, the British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research UK, Age UK, Alzheimer's Society or Mind;
- Look for sites that end in .org (not-for-profit organisations) or .gov (government run);
- Look for online support groups;

Some of the most useful sites are given below.

12. USEFUL PHYSICAL ILLNESS INFORMATION WEBSITES

ALL ILLNESSES

www.nhs.uk Information about health services and where to find them. Symptom checker online and a Medicines A-Z.

www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk Advice on self-care, symptom checkers, details of web and telephone services, leaflets and videos about what to do when you or someone you care for is ill.

CANCER

www.macmillan.org.uk Living with cancer? Macmillan Cancer Care is here to help. Good advice is available if you or someone you know is living with cancer. Ph. 0808 808 00 00.

www.mycancertreatment.nhs.uk A new, interactive website designed to help patients make informed decisions about where to access cancer services.

www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Cancer/Pages/Symptoms.aspx This link was recommended by Dr Walker and lists signs and symptoms of different types of cancer. There are a number of useful links and videos on the site.

www.mariecurie.org.uk provides care and support through terminal illness. Ph. 0800 090 2309

OTHER ILLNESSES

www.asbestos.com Services and free resources for patients and families affected by mesothelioma.

www.alzheimers.org.uk This site has helpful information and advice on both living with Alzheimer's and caring for people who suffer with the disease. Ph. 0330 333 0804

www.bhf.org.uk The British Heart Foundation website offers comprehensive information about heart disease, offering the opportunity to get advice and also share your experience with other people. Ph. 0300 330 3311

www.epilepsy.org.uk Epilepsy Action offers advice and information on the various types of epilepsy that affect many people throughout the UK. Ph. 0808 800 5050

www.sheffieldachesandpains.com Self-help advice on aches and pains.

13. USEFUL GENERAL HEALTH INFORMATION WEBSITES

www.drfoosterhealth.co.uk This is a comparison website for hospital services including information about waiting times, consultants and infection rates.

www.fpa.org.uk The Family Planning Association website offers a wide range of information and advice on sexual health and contraception. The site also gives details of where family planning services can be found.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities This provides a practical guide for people managing cases of infectious diseases in schools and other childcare settings.

www.napp.org.uk The National Association for Patient Participation promotes and supports patient participation in primary care. It publishes monthly E-bulletins with the latest news and information relevant to patients. The Stewart Medical Centre is a member of NAPP.

www.tsft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-information-leaflets/ Musgrove Park Hospital produce a number of patient information leaflets with post-operative advice and other hospital related information. You can use the A-Z search facility to search for a leaflet by title or by using a keyword search that will look for that word in the content of the leaflets.

www.vcspd.org/ Voluntary and Community Services, Peaks and Dales offer a number of services to residents across Buxton and beyond. Visit their site for more details on how they can help. Ph. 01298 23970

14. USEFUL WELL BEING WEBSITES

www.activederbyshire.co.uk With details of events and activities in the local area with the goal of getting more people taking part in regular exercise. Ph. 01773 741915

www.age.org.uk This provides advice on health and wellbeing for the elderly. Ph. 0800 055 6112

www.livelifebetterderbyshire.org.uk Free help for the people of Derbyshire to Live Life Better.

www.livewellderby.co.uk Caring experts are ready to support you to lose weight, stop smoking, get fitter and transform your life.

www.lltff.com Be happier, sleep better, do more, feel more confident. living life to the full is a great self-help website used by our GP's.

www.nhs.uk/oneyou. One You is here to help you get healthier and feel better with free tips, tools and support.

www.nhs.uk/staywell Get ready for winter with this winter health advice site from NHS Choices.

NOTES

INFORMATION DISCLAIMER

The information given in this booklet is believed to be correct. The suppliers of the information have taken every reasonable care in the preparation of the content but cannot accept liability for any errors or omissions therein.

Any medical information published in this booklet is intended for use as information or for educational purposes and should not be considered as medical advice. If you have a concern about your health, you should contact a health professional for appropriate medical diagnosis and advice.

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