

Guidance for Early Years Providers and Schools on the Use of Over-the-Counter Medicines

NHS West Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group has agreed a policyⁱ supporting self-care for minor or self-limiting conditions. The policy states that for these conditions, patients (or their parents) are encouraged to self-care, and are expected to buy over-the-counter (OTC) medicines when appropriate. Therefore, GPs will not routinely prescribe these medicines.

OTC medicines include those medicines on the General Sale List (GSL) that may be bought from retail outlets without medical supervision, or Pharmacy (P) medicines that can be purchased from registered pharmacies under the supervision of a pharmacist.

Examples of medicines that do not require a prescription and which parents can give permission to administer include:

- Paracetamol, ibuprofen or antihistamines - provided they are supplied in packaging with clear dosage instructions that are age appropriate for the child
- Moisturising / soothing preparations for minor skin conditions
- Sunscreen for routine protection while playing / learning outside

These examples are illustrative only and not a comprehensive list of medicines that can be administered. To help determine whether a child is well enough to attend school, or an Early Years Provider setting, parents can be advised to review the NHS Choices website.

Nurseries, pre-schools, child-minders, schools, out-of-school and after-school clubs and holiday clubs are, therefore, advised that parental permission is sufficient for the administration of OTC medicines to a child for minor conditions. GPs should not be asked to write prescriptions for OTC medicines.

Early Years Providers

The Department of Education produced a document in 2017: “**Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage: Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five**”.ⁱⁱ

This document recommends that all providers must have, and implement a policy and procedures for, administering medicines. Key points are:

- (1) Prescription medicines must not be administered unless they have been prescribed for a child by a doctor, dentist, nurse, or pharmacist.
- (2) “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”.
- (3) 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 document, therefore, supports Early Years Providers to request the written permission of a parent, or carer. However, there is ***no requirement for OTC medicines used in conditions suitable for self-care to be written on a prescription.***

Schools, Out of School, After School and Holiday Clubs

Advice for use of OTC medicines in these settings is the same as that for the Early Years Providers i.e. ***OTC medicines can be administered following written permission by the child's parent, or carer.*** GPs and other prescribers are not required to provide confirmation that the medicine is appropriate. Schools should have their own policy that outlines the circumstances in which non-prescription medicines may be administered to a child, or used by the child, while at school.

In December 2015, the Department for Education produced the guidance ***“Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions: Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England”***.ⁱⁱⁱ This guidance is primarily related to policies and procedures required to be in place for children with medical conditions requiring an individual health care plan. It states that: “no child under 16 should be given prescription or non-prescription medicines without their parent’s written consent” and also “schools should set out the circumstances in which non-prescription medicines may be administered”.

Schools and Early Years providers are, therefore, requested to review their policies to enable parents to give written consent for the use of an OTC non-prescribed medicine for minor conditions, without requesting a prescription be written. This will support the Clinical Commissioning Group’s self-care policy, thereby reducing demand for appointments in general practice for minor conditions suitable for self care and will reduce expenditure on prescriptions for OTC medicines.

*With thanks to Warrington CCG for their document “Over the counter medicines in nurseries and schools” upon which this document is based.
This version was developed and ratified by NHS Eastern Cheshire, NHS South Cheshire and NHS Vale Royal Clinical Commissioning Groups and has been adapted by NHS West Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group.*

References cited in the document:

ⁱ https://www.westcheshireccg.nhs.uk/document_uploads/clinical-policies/Self-care_Policy_October_2016.pdf

ⁱⁱ https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2017/03/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/484418/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions.pdf