**News release**

6 November 2020

**Prepare now for common ailments this winter**

The NHS in North Yorkshire and York says residents can take steps to look after their own health if they succumb to a common winter illness like a cough or cold.

By keeping a medicine cabinet at home containing simple remedies like paracetamol, ibuprofen and anti-diarrhoea tablets, NHS North Yorkshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS Vale of York CCG say many people will be able to deal with a short-term winter infection themselves without needing to see a GP.

The call for patients to keep small quantities of over-the-counter remedies to hand – in a secure space and out of the reach of children – coincides with [Ask Your Pharmacy Week (2-9 November)](https://www.npa.co.uk/ayp2020) and has been backed by Community Pharmacy North Yorkshire, which represents pharmacies in North Yorkshire and York.

NHS North Yorkshire CCG Clinical Chair, Dr Charles Parker, said: “We’re approaching a time of year when we routinely see an increase in winter infections like coughs, colds and sore throats. GPs in North Yorkshire and York won’t normally issue a prescription for these short-term conditions, but effective over-the-counter medicines are available to buy from pharmacies and supermarkets. With winter just around the corner, it’s sensible to be prepared.”

NHS Vale of York CCG Clinical Chair, Dr Nigel Wells, added: “In the majority of cases, common winter illnesses may only last a week or two and will usually resolve themselves without the need for prescription medication.

“Patients can get expert advice and over-the-counter remedies that may ease some of the symptoms from their local pharmacy – and if symptoms suggest it’s something more serious, they will advise a patient to make a telephone appointment with their GP team or call NHS 111.

“While we are encouraging patients to ‘Think Pharmacy’, it’s important to remember that if you are displaying symptoms of Covid-19 (high temperature, new continuous cough, a loss of or change to smell or taste), then you should [stay at home and arrange a test](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).”

The [medicines the NHS recommends people have at home](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/your-medicine-cabinet/) to treat common winter illnesses include:-

* Painkillers like aspirin, paracetamol and ibuprofen which are highly effective at relieving many minor aches, pains and ailments, including a common cold
* Oral rehydration salts, which are an easy way to help restore the body's balance of minerals and fluid if you are suffering from fever, diarrhoea and vomiting
* Anti-diarrhoea medicine which can control the symptoms of diarrhoea that can be brought on by a stomach virus or food poisoning
* Antacid tablets or liquid, which will reduce stomach acidity and bring relief from indigestion and heartburn

Some patients also find cough syrups are useful in easing the symptoms of coughs and sore throats, though natural remedies like hot lemon and honey can also be effective.

Ian Dean from Community Pharmacy North Yorkshire said: “Pharmacy teams are part of the NHS family and can provide clinical advice for a range of minor illnesses such as coughs, colds and tummy troubles. There’s no need to make an appointment and many minor conditions can be treated without needing to see a doctor.

“Pharmacies will remain open during the impending National Lockdown, but please adhere to Covid rules relating to face coverings and social distancing to protect yourself, pharmacy staff and others – and if you have symptoms of coronavirus, please do stay at home and [arrange a test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test).”

**ENDS**

 **Notes to editors**

**About NHS North Yorkshire CCG**

[NHS North Yorkshire Clinical Commissioning Group](https://www.northyorkshireccg.nhs.uk) was formed in April 2020 and is responsible for ‘buying’ health services for more than 425,000 people living in the county. It replaces NHS Hambleton, Richmondshire and Whitby CCG, NHS Harrogate and Rural District CCG and NHS Scarborough and Ryedale CCG which have now been disestablished. The organisation is led by Accountable Officer, Amanda Bloor, and the Clinical Chair is Dr Charles Parker.

**About NHS Vale of York CCG**

[NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group](https://www.valeofyorkccg.nhs.uk) serves a population of more than 350,000 people in York, Selby, Tadcaster, Easingwold and Pocklington and the surrounding towns, villages and rural areas in the Vale of York. It is led by Accountable Officer, Phil Mettam. The Clinical Chair is Dr Nigel Wells.