

February 2020

Self-care for Minor Conditions

How much does your practice spend on prescribing self-care items compared with other practices in North Yorkshire? See bar chart on appendix 2.

The NHS is increasing efforts to encourage patients to apply self-care for minor ailments. This should reduce demand for GP appointments and enable GPs to focus on caring for higher risk patients.

The three CCGs will soon form into one North Yorkshire CCG but we have been working together to encourage greater but appropriate use of self-care from 1st April 2020. Across the three North Yorkshire CCGs, the NHS drug spend on prescribed items that could be purchased is £3.6M per annum. It is estimated that £1.6M of this could be avoided locally each year by increased adoption of self-care. This can be achieved by not prescribing for self-limiting conditions, declining requests for items suitable for self-care and avoiding items with poor evidence of clinical benefit. The three CCGs ask all GP practices to apply our self-care program consistent with national guidance; www.prescriptionchanges.co.uk.

General Actions for GP Practices on Self-care

- Nominate a Self-Care Champion in the practice – perhaps a prescription clerk, receptionist or similar. The self-care champion should support other staff to signpost patients to self-care. Please inform stacey.stanton@nhs.net who your nominated Self-Care Champion is and provide a contact email address who we will liaise with going forward with the Self-Care Project.
- Engage all members of practice staff in promoting self-care. It is vital that everyone is involved, especially reception staff, prescribers and dispensary teams.
- Signpost patients to use their community pharmacy for advice on self-care. **See appendix 1 for exceptions.**
- Encourage patients to use the NHS App – see resources section later.

Simple Analgesia

All practices are encouraged to focus on their prescribing of paracetamol and simple analgesia and encourage self-care where appropriate. Compared with other practices in North Yorkshire, **how much does your practice spend on prescribing simple analgesia that could be classed as self-care items? See bar chart on appendix 3.**

Actions for GP Practices on Simple Analgesia

- Review prescribing of 'as required' simpler analgesia (e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen, co-codamol 8mg/500mg) on repeat prescriptions and encourage self-care where possible. Exceptions include vulnerable/frail patients and those with chronic conditions who may not be able to access self-care products.
- Do not routinely add simple analgesics to repeat prescriptions from hospital discharge. Encourage patients to purchase over-the-counter medications.

Please note: patients should be informed of any change in their repeat prescriptions. Ideally this should be done face to face, by telephone or by letter. Alternative methods of communication may be considered but must be clear and unambiguous.

Helpful Resources on Self-Care for GP Practices

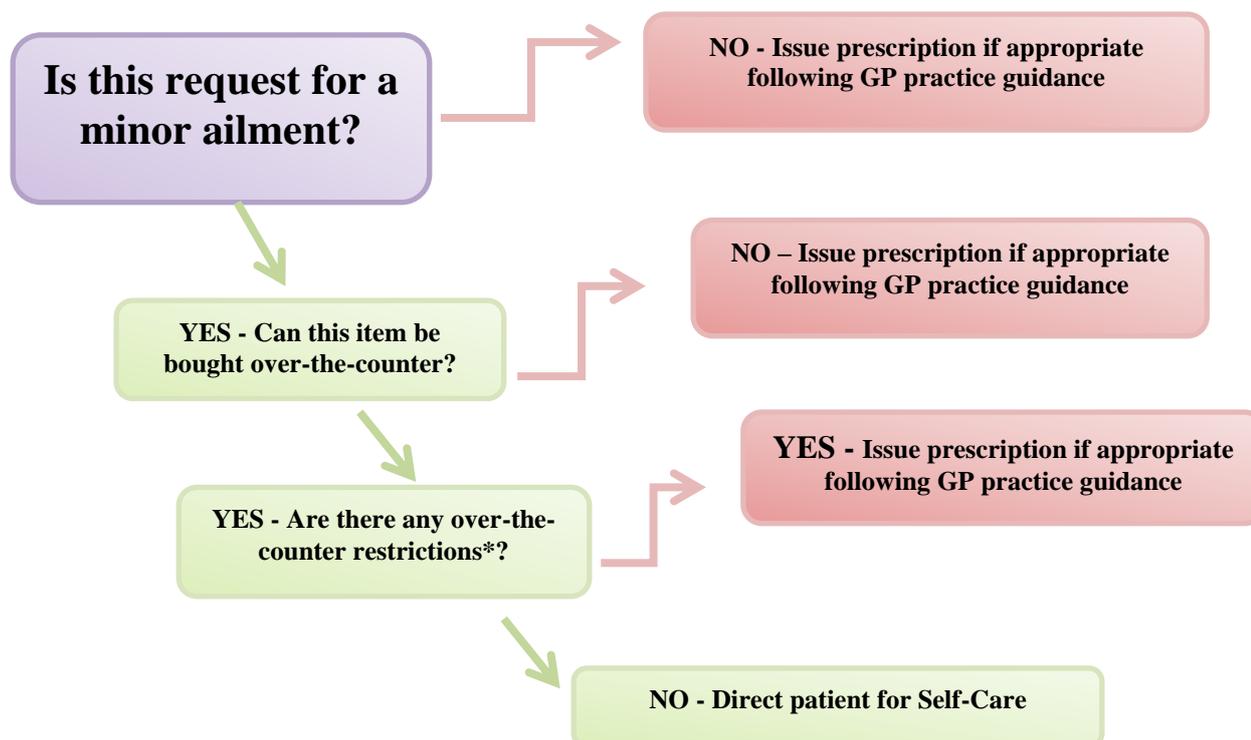
Self-care Phrases to Use

Practices may find the following phrases useful in consultations when encouraging patients to self-care:

- Highlight the positive: ***“This item is available without a prescription. Please visit your local pharmacy team for advice and treatment if needed.”***
- Signpost to other services: ***“This is likely to clear up in a few days, if you find the symptoms troublesome speak to your pharmacy team for advice.”***
- Change behaviours: ***“Minor conditions can be treated without having to see the doctor. You can keep a stock of medication at home yourself. Just ask your local pharmacy team for advice.”***
- Explain the change: ***“I realise you have had this on prescription in the past, but our policy has changed. We are now asking people to buy medication themselves. This helps us to free up appointments and resources”***

Encouraging Patient Self-Care from Practice Level

The flow chart below may be useful to practice staff in order to encourage self-care when patients request prescription items for minor ailments.



* Please note that some medicines for self-care have restrictions regarding what they can be used for and who they can be sold to, so please check the following reference source before recommending a patient purchases a medicine:

<https://www.harrogateandruraldistrictccg.nhs.uk/data/uploads/medicines-management/self-care/selfcare-and-otc-items-quick-reference-guide.pdf>

Helpful Resources (cont.)

Supporting Patients with Self-Care Options

Patients should be encouraged to look for the lowest cost version of a medicine that is recommended for self-care. All medicines have to be quality assured against the same strict standards; cheaper doesn't mean inferior. Patients should be advised to look for medicines sold by their ingredient name, such as paracetamol and ibuprofen, as these can often be less costly but will be just as effective.

NHS App

The new NHS app is a simple and secure way to access a range of NHS services on a smartphone or tablet. It can be used by patients to support them in self-care for a wide range of conditions. Patients can use the app to:

- Check symptoms
- Find out what to do when they need help urgently
- Book and manage appointments at their GP surgery
- Order repeat prescriptions
- View their GP medical record securely
- Register to be an organ donor
- Choose how the NHS uses their data.

NHS Community Pharmacy Consultation Service

NHS England commissions this service to support patients to self-manage their health and to better integrate community pharmacy into the urgent care network. Patients can be referred to this service from NHS 111 for help with minor illnesses or urgent supplies of medicines. Pharmacists provide patients with healthcare advice or assess if an emergency supply of medicine is appropriate. Onward referrals can be made if necessary and GPs are notified electronically of actions taken.

Pharmacies represent a vital resource for local communities. They offer an easy point of contact that many people rely on, and provide significant net benefits to the NHS, public sector, patients and wider society. As well as improving the health and wellbeing of local communities, pharmacists and their teams are part of the primary care workforce and can help to free up valuable GP appointments, reduce pressure on hospitals, bring care closer to home and contribute to the 'Empowering People and Communities' agenda.

Practices are encouraged to build strong working relationships with their local community pharmacies through the local PCN Community Pharmacists.

Further materials will become available soon and a resource pack including training will be easily accessible on the CCG website page(s). The team will welcome ideas and suggestions that our colleagues may wish to recommend.

Many thanks in anticipation

The North Yorkshire Medicines Management Team

Appendix 1

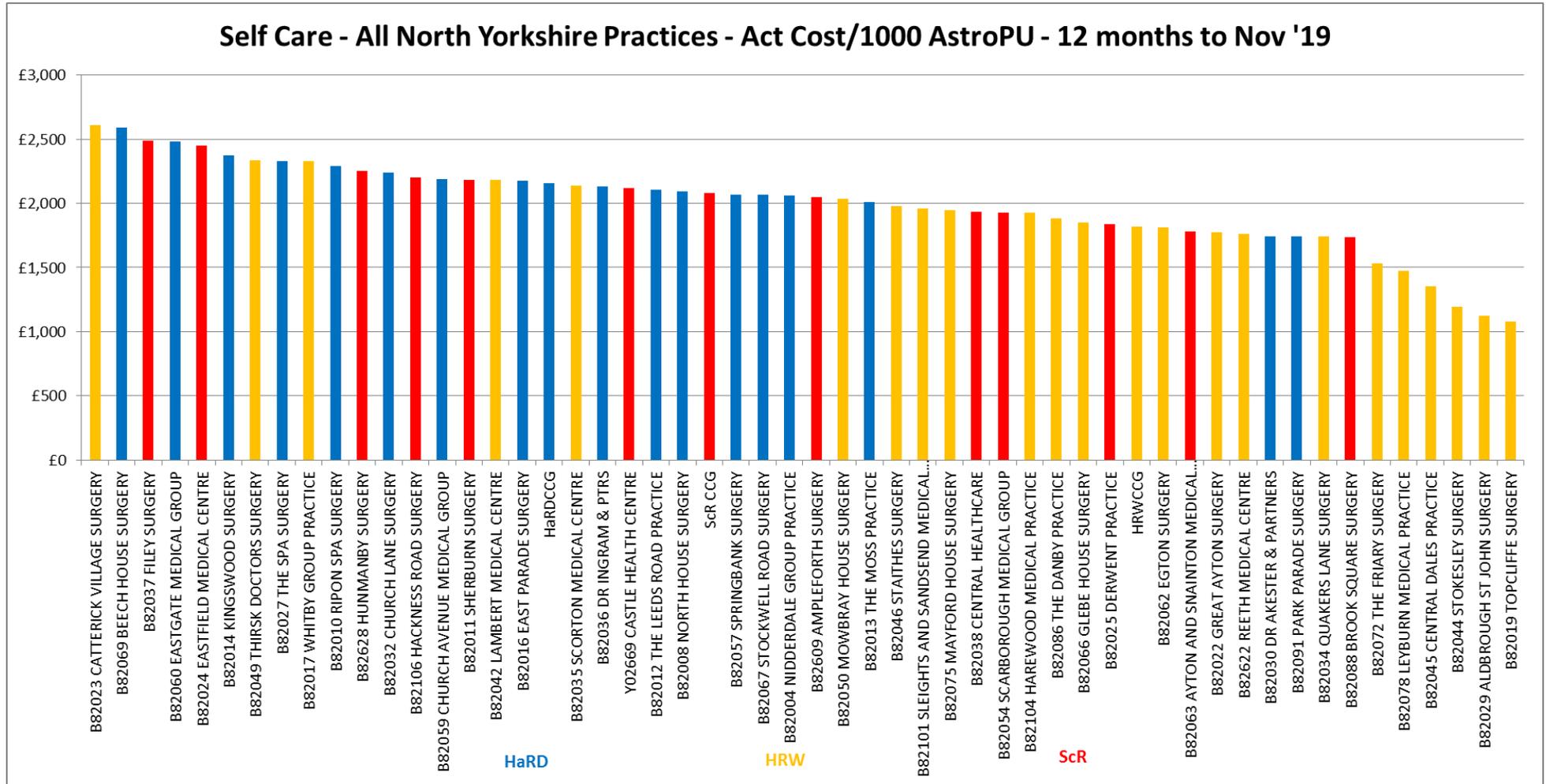
General Exceptions to the National Guidance

There are certain scenarios where patients should continue to have their treatments prescribed and these are outlined below:

- Patients prescribed an OTC treatment for a long term condition e.g. regular pain relief for chronic arthritis or treatments for inflammatory bowel disease. This does not include long term conditions which are also classified as minor conditions e.g. mild to moderate hay fever.
- For the treatment of more complex forms of minor illnesses e.g. severe migraines that are unresponsive to over the counter medicines.
- For those patients that have symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor i.e. those with red flag symptoms; for example indigestion with very bad pain.
- Treatment for complex patients e.g. immunosuppressed patients.
- Patients prescribed OTC products to treat an adverse effect or symptom of a more complex illness and/or prescription only medications.
- Patients requiring treatments that are prescription only medicines.
- Circumstances where the product licence doesn't allow the product to be sold over the counter to certain groups of patients. This may vary by medicine, but could include babies, children and/or women who are pregnant or breast-feeding. In addition, some indications may not allow OTC sale e.g. hydrocortisone cream applied to the face.
- Patients with a minor condition suitable for self-care that has not responded sufficiently to treatment with an OTC product.
- Patients where the clinician considers that the presenting symptom is due to a condition that would not be considered a minor condition.
- Circumstances where the prescriber believes that in their clinical judgement, exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the recommendation to self-care.
- Individual patients where the clinician considers that their ability to self-manage is compromised as a consequence of medical, mental health or significant social vulnerability to the extent that their health and/or wellbeing could be adversely affected, if reliant on self-care. To note that being exempt from paying a prescription charge does not automatically warrant an exception to the guidance.
- Consideration should also be given to safeguarding issues (including, but not limited to, children); particularly if there are concerns that treatment might otherwise not be provided.

Appendix 2

Bar-chart comparing the spend per 1000 ASTRO-PU on self-care medicines in GP Practices in North Yorkshire



Appendix 3

Bar-chart comparing the spend per 1000 ASTRO-PU on prescribing of simple analgesia in GP Practices in North Yorkshire

