

Good Practice Guide – Supporting Self-care in Care Homes

Background

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) encourages care homes to support their residents in accessing and purchasing over the counter (OTC) products to enable residents to self-care in a similar way as a person would in their own home. This guide aims to provide clarity on the use of self-care and homely remedies in care homes for this purpose.

Both self-care and homely remedies involve the purchasing of OTC products for the treatment of minor ailments which should not be routinely prescribed in primary care.

Over the counter (OTC) products can be categorised as follows:

Personal care

Products which can be purchased for a resident that do not need a Health Care Professional (HCP) involved, and do not need additional guidance beyond the packaging advice e.g. body moisturiser, shampoo, toothpaste etc.

Self-care

Products which can be purchased by or on behalf of a resident. Self-care treatments can either be:

- Purchased by or on behalf of a resident where advice from a healthcare professional may not have been sought. If in any doubt whether the product is safe and appropriate for the resident to use check with the resident's GP/ healthcare professional.
- Suggested by a Health Care Professional; the Health Care Professional should provide advice on its use and how long the treatment is to continue.

OTC products for self-care are usually not prescribed through the NHS because they are for self-limiting conditions e.g. olive oil ear drops or are classed as having 'limited evidence of clinical effectiveness'.

The homes medicine policy should cover self-care and the purchasing of OTC products.

Homely remedies

These are a limited range of OTC medicines purchased by the care home and kept as stock and given to residents where the GP has indicated it would be appropriate to do so e.g. paracetamol, indigestion remedy etc. The care home should have a homely remedy policy in place to support this. Homely remedies can only be used for an agreed period, usually up to a maximum of 48 hours prior to a GP review.

What is the difference between self-care and homely remedies?

Medicines for self-care and homely remedies commonly cause confusion. The following table may help to differentiate:

	Homely Remedy	Self-care
What is it?	OTC products purchased by the care home without the need for a prescription to help manage self-care conditions and minor ailments.	Self-care is the actions an individual can take for themselves to develop, protect, maintain, and improve their health and wellbeing. Individuals may do this independently or with support from others. Certain OTC products can be purchased to support an individual to self-care.
When would it be purchased?	Homely remedies are kept as stock in the care home to allow access to products that would commonly be available in any household.	A self-care product is purchased for or by an individual in response to a specific medical condition.
Who can it be given to?	Can be administered to any appropriate resident.	Can only be given to the individual resident for whom it was purchased.
What products are included?	Limited list of medicines for a small number of conditions e.g. pain, indigestion etc. listed in the care homes homely remedies policy that have been agreed by the residents GP.	More extensive list of medicines covering a larger number of conditions listed in NHSE guidance .
Who pays for it?	Purchased by care home.	Purchased by resident or their representative.
How long can it be used for?	Administered at the discretion of a carer (following initial agreement with the GP) to a resident for up to 48 hours.	Determined by the condition being treated following GP/HCP advice.
Storage	In a locked cupboard away from other medicines, clearly annotated with 'homely remedy'.	In a locked cupboard or drawer usually in the resident's room, clearly annotated as a 'self-care product' and the resident's full name.
Who can administer it?	Care home staff who are trained and competent to administer medicines/use homely remedies.	The resident or care home staff who are trained and competent to administer medicines and in accordance with any appropriate GP or HCP advice (including a check on possible interactions).
Record Keeping	Administration recorded on MAR/eMAR and annotated that a 'homely remedy' was given. Completion in homely remedy book or recording sheet.	Administration recorded on MAR/eMAR and annotated that a 'self-care product' was given or self-administered.
Whose property is it?	It is property of the care home.	It is the property of the individual resident.

Where can I find more guidance and information?

Self-care leaflets on minor ailments for residents can be accessed via
<https://www.nottsapc.nhs.uk/patients/>

Self Care Forum Support people to self-care
<https://www.selfcareforum.org/>

Care Quality Commission (CQC) advice on 'Over the counter medicines and homely remedies'
<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/over-counter-medicines-homely-remedies>

NHS England: Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/policy-guidance-conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-be-routinely-prescribed-in-primary-care/>

Guidance for the Management of Medicines in Social Care Establishments
<https://www.nottinghamshiremedicinesmanagement.nhs.uk/media/ssyhsjhm/guidance-for-the-management-of-medicines-in-social-care-establishments-v4.pdf>

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Table adapted with the kind permission of Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB Medicines Optimisation Team.

All guidance and links in this document are correct at the time of publication. Any amendments made to the original document by other organisations is the responsibility of that organisation.

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