

Position statement on the prescribing for conjunctivitis in patients over 2 years

Following the NHS England guidance 'Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs' (March 2018) the following changes to prescribing have been agreed across Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge.

From 16 March 2021
Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge Clinical Commissioning Groups (BHR CCGS) no longer supports the prescribing of antimicrobial eye drops and ointment for conjunctivitis caused by a bacterial infection

Decision

The decision to stop antimicrobial eye drops and ointment for conjunctivitis caused by a bacterial infection applies to ALL patients across Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge unless the patient fall into one of the exceptions listed below.

If symptoms are not improving or responding to treatment, then patients should be encouraged to seek further advice from a pharmacy, NHS app, NHS website or NHS 111. Please note that if the patient wears contact lenses and has conjunctivitis symptoms as well as spots on their eyelids, they might be allergic to the lenses

For care home patients: access to treatment should be considered via a care home policy.

Exceptions

BHR CCGs have agreed exceptions to this recommendation, where they accept that prescribing should continue in primary care for:

- Severe bacterial cases whereby antibiotic eye drops and eye ointments can be used to clear the infection
- Pregnancy or breastfeeding
- The clinician considers that the patient's ability to self-manage is compromised as a consequence of significant vulnerability to the extent that their health and/or wellbeing could be adversely affected, if reliant on self-care. Consideration should also be given to safeguarding issues

This decision was made because:

- Treatment isn't usually needed for conjunctivitis in general as the symptoms usually clear within a week. For advice on self-care, please refer to [NHS website](#)
- Irritant conjunctivitis will clear up as soon as whatever is causing it is removed
- Allergic conjunctivitis can usually be treated with anti-allergy medications such as antihistamines which can be purchased. The substance that caused the allergy should be avoided
- Antibiotic eye drops and ointment **will not work** in viral conjunctivitis

- If patients want to use treatments for conjunctivitis, they are widely available to purchase at reasonable cost at pharmacies
- BHR CCGs have a duty to spend taxpayer's money wisely, to make sure they get the best value possible – especially when NHS funding is being severely squeezed and more patients are being seen with more complex health issues than ever before

References

1. NHS website: conjunctivitis- last reviewed: 22 February 2021. Page accessed 23 April 2021 <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/conjunctivitis/>
2. NHS England and NHS Clinical Commissioners. Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs, March 2018. Publishing approval reference 07851 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-CCGs/>