

Position statement on the prescribing for infrequent constipation in adults

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 treatment for infrequent constipation in adults

Decision

The decision to stop treatment for infrequent constipation in adults applies to ALL patients across Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge unless the patient fall into one of the exceptions listed below.

Please note that this does not affect treatment for **chronic constipation** or if taking medicine(s) that's causing constipation such as opioid painkillers

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

Exception

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

- 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:

- Constipation can affect people of all ages and can be just for a short period of time. It can be effectively managed with a change in diet or lifestyle- further advice is available on [NHS website](#)
- Pharmacists can suggest an over the counter laxative which can work within 3 days. These should be only be used for a short course of treatment
- 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: constipation- last reviewed: 3 September 2020. Page accessed 23 April 2021 <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/constipation/>
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/>