

Position statement on the prescribing for indigestion and heartburn 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 indigestion and heartburn

Decision

The decision to stop treatment for indigestion and heartburn 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. For care home patients: access to treatment should be considered via a care home policy.

Exception

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

- Chronic symptoms
- 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:

- Most people have indigestion at some point and are able to manage their indigestion and heartburn by taking medication such as antacids and proton pump inhibitors. These treatments are widely available to purchase at reasonable cost at pharmacies, supermarkets and other major retailers
- Most people can prevent indigestion and heartburn occurring by simple changes to diet and lifestyle and avoiding foods that make indigestion worse e.g. rich spicy or fatty foods, caffeinated drinks
- 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: indigestion- last reviewed: 21 May 2020. Page accessed 23 April 2021 <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/indigestion/>

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/>