

Position statement on the prescribing of cough and cold remedies

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 9 November 2021
North East London Clinical Commissioning Group (NEL CCG),
Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge Integrated Care
Partnership (BHR ICP) no longer supports the prescribing of cough
and cold remedies

Decision

The decision to stop the short term prescribing cough and cold remedies applies to ALL patients across Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge. BHR ICP have agreed NO exceptions to this recommendation.

Products that will not be routinely prescribed include aromatic inhalations, vapour rubs, cough suppressants and/or expectorants, demulcents, lozenges, systemic nasal decongestants and many other branded and unbranded over-the-counter (OTC) or general sales list (GSL) preparations.

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. 'Red flag' symptoms should be referred and treated appropriately.

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

This decision was made because:

- There is insufficient high quality evidence to support the prescribing for symptomatic treatments for coughs and colds
- Most coughs and colds are self-limiting and tend to improve over time and treatment is not usually required. An acute cough is a natural response to keep the airways clear whilst the body fights infection
- Cough and cold remedies are readily available for purchase in community pharmacies, supermarkets and many other retail stores. If the patient wishes

to use these remedies then they can be sign-posted to pharmacies for further advice, where appropriate

- NEL CCG BHR ICP 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: Cough – last reviewed: 1 May 2021 Page accessed 14 September 2021 <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cough/>
2. NHS website: Common cold – last reviewed: 4 February 2021. Page accessed 14 September 2021 <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/common-cold/>
3. 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/>