Have your say on our proposals

Proposed changes to prescribing in Bexley
Seeking your views

NHS Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is seeking your views on proposals to make some changes to the range of items that are available on prescription from the NHS in Bexley. This leaflet explains these proposals and how to give your views.
About NHS Bexley CCG

NHS Bexley CCG is a clinically-led, membership organisation made up of all GP practices in Bexley. The CCG works with the local population and other partners to improve local healthcare by empowering people to lead healthier lives, and to plan, purchase and monitor most of the NHS services our residents need if they become unwell. The CCG serves a rising population of approximately 240,000 people and manages an annual budget of around £334 million.

What are we proposing?

We are proposing to no longer support the routine prescribing of the following items:

- Self-care medications for illnesses that will get better over time and health supplements
- Lactose-free, soya-based and ‘stay-down’ (anti-reflux) infant formulas
- Gluten-free products

Self-care medications are products that can be purchased without a prescription from a pharmacy or supermarket. For the majority of healthy people, most minor illnesses can be managed with advice and self-care without the need to see a doctor. Most minor illnesses will get better with time.

We believe it would be better use of NHS money if patients buy these products themselves rather than have them prescribed by the NHS. You can find the list of products and medicines included on page 6.

However, we propose that those patients with long-term (chronic) conditions who are receiving on-going treatments, for example steroid creams for diagnosed, long-term skin conditions or pain relief for osteoarthritis, would still be able to be prescribed these medicines on the NHS.

As part of these proposals, we will work to support GPs, pharmacists and health professionals to better signpost patients where to get help with their medicines and look after themselves better.

GPs will still make a clinical judgement when considering whether it is acceptable or appropriate to ask a patient to purchase their medication.
Why do we need to make these changes?

We are committed to help people to lead healthier and longer lives. As a CCG we have a set amount of money to pay for all of the health services that local people need. We have a duty to spend this money wisely.

We need to use the money available to meet the greatest health needs of our patients so that as many people as possible can benefit.

- By spending less on prescribing these easily-purchased medicines, we can spend this money on other NHS treatments
- We need to free up the time of GPs so that they have more time to see people with more complex health conditions

The increasing demand for prescriptions for medication that can be bought over the counter at relatively low cost, often for self-limiting or minor conditions, shows how important it is for us to work closer with patients to ensure we get the best possible value from NHS resources, whilst eliminating wastage and improving patient outcomes.

- We want to promote a self-care agenda, which can deliver better results for people where they take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing with the support of the CCG and its local healthcare professionals
- We want to support residents to use alternatives such as visiting their local pharmacist for help with minor illnesses and common ailments, using NHS 111, the NHS Choices website (www.nhs.uk), the Health Help Now website (www.healthhelponnow-nhs.net) and NHS Go (www.nhs.go.uk) rather than visiting their GP or Bexley’s two urgent care centres
- We need to plan services for Bexley’s growing population, and demand for complex health services is increasing
What is self-care?

Around 15 million people in the UK have a long-term condition such as asthma or diabetes. These conditions, which are usually life-long and require medication to manage, are becoming increasingly common throughout the UK. People are living longer and, during their lifetimes, may make lifestyle choices that raise the risk of these conditions developing.

As people get older and face an increased risk of developing a long-term condition, it becomes more important for people to make healthier choices and to receive the help and support they need to look after themselves in a healthy way. The NHS calls this ‘self-care’ and it is probably something that residents already do to some degree.

Self-care includes healthy behaviour that anyone can do such as brushing teeth, doing some exercise or quitting smoking, as well as managing common self-limiting health conditions with the support of a healthcare professional.

Why self-care is important to you

The NHS believes self-care is important because most people – even those with a long-term condition – will spend only a tiny proportion of their time in a consultation with a healthcare professional. Day-to-day, most people manage their healthcare condition at home, seeking support when they need it from credible sources of health advice such as NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk), Health Help Now Bexley (www.healthhelpnow-nhs.net), WebGP and also convenient, accessible and skilled healthcare professionals such as community pharmacists.

When people are supported to self-care successfully, many people can take care of their health, reducing the time they spend within the healthcare system accessing help and advice, and increasing their quality of life and the amount of leisure time they can enjoy.

When people are empowered to look after themselves as far as they are able, this also helps to reduce the number of GP consultations, which frees up GP appointments for when people need them, and for the people who need them most – the very young and elderly, for example.
What is included in the proposals?

We are proposing to no longer support the routine provision of the following products on prescription.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-care medication categories for illnesses that will get better over time and health supplements:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Acne creams</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Anti-diarrhoeal medication for short-term use</td>
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<td>• Anti-fungal treatment for short-term minor ailments</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Baby colic treatment</td>
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<td>• Camouflage creams</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cold sore creams</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cough and cold remedies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ear wax removers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Eye drops</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Head lice and scabies treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Haemorrhoidal preparations for short-term use</td>
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<td>• Homeopathic preparations</td>
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<td>• Indigestion remedies</td>
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<td>• Laxatives for short-term use</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mouthwashes and mouth ulcer treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Nappy rash cream</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Painkillers for short-term pain control e.g. headaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Hay fever treatments</td>
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<td>• Sun creams</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Threadworm treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Topical steroids for short-term use for bites, stings or mild dermatitis</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Vitamins and supplements</td>
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<td>• Warts and verruca treatment</td>
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Lactose-free, soya-based and ‘stay-down’ (anti-reflux) infant formulas

Breastfeeding is strongly encouraged by NHS healthcare professionals as it provides the safest, most nutritionally adequate form of feeding for most infants.

Where babies are not breastfed, parents should purchase appropriate infant formula milks. For those qualifying for ‘Healthy Start’ support, vouchers may be spent on infant formula milk. For more information about Healthy Start, please visit www.healthystart.nhs.uk.

Lactose-free infant formula is prescribed for infants who are intolerant to infant formula based on cow’s milk, which contains lactose. Historically, it was difficult to buy infant formula used for lactose intolerance as there was a limited range available on the high street. There is now online and in-store availability of cow’s milk, and lactose-free, soya-based, anti-reflux alternatives for infant formula at most major pharmacies, supermarkets and online. These are now at a similar cost to standard infant formula, which is not prescribed on prescriptions in the NHS.

Gluten-free products

Gluten-free products are currently prescribed for people who are intolerant to gluten in their diet, such as people with coeliac disease.

While coeliac disease is a very serious condition, a gluten-free diet doesn’t require medical supervision, and this proposal would not impact on the standard of care we provide to coeliac patients.

Many foods are naturally gluten-free such as rice and potatoes. Where gluten-free products are required, they are available to buy for a similar price to other food items, and are now widely available in supermarkets. The CCG is also committed to reducing inequalities in access to healthcare and it should be remembered that people with other food intolerances or medical conditions such as diabetes, are not able to get specialist foods for their conditions on prescription.

NHS England is currently reviewing the prescribing of gluten-free foods across England.
Who would be affected by these proposals?

Many people will be affected by the proposals in relation to self-care medicines. You do not need to see a GP to treat common ailments such as coughs, colds, dry eyes, or hay fever.

Parents of young children may be affected by our proposals relating to infant formulas. There is a wide range of infant formulas available in supermarkets and some pharmacies.

People with coeliac disease, and their families, may be affected by the CCG’s proposals relating to gluten-free foods. There is a wide range of gluten-free products available in supermarkets, some pharmacies and online.

According to Coeliac UK, a national charity for people with coeliac disease, the condition is known to affect at least one in 100 people in the UK; of these, about 24 per cent will have a clinical diagnosis. In Bexley, this equates to around 580 people diagnosed with the disease. Bexley healthcare professionals know that these people must be supported to maintain a gluten-free diet to make sure they stay healthy. We intend to continue to work with local pharmacists, dieticians and GPs to support people who suffer from coeliac disease to better understand their condition and to help them stay healthy.

Advice can be provided by pharmacists who are experts in medicines. You don’t need an appointment to see your local pharmacist.

General advice is also available on the NHS choices website at www.nhs.uk as well as NHS Go (www.nhsgo.uk) and WebGP. When you are injured and unwell and not sure where to go for help, you can either visit Health Help Now (www.healthhelpnow-nhs.net) or dial 111 to access the NHS 111 service.
In 2016/17, we spent £30.8 million on prescribing medicines, of which £1.4 million a year is spent on medicines and other items that are also available for people to buy without a prescription from a pharmacy or a supermarket.

In addition, we estimate that around £550,000 worth of medicines are thrown away each year by Bexley residents. This contributes to the £300 million spent on unused medicines that is wasted by the NHS as a whole across the UK each year.

The increasing demand for prescriptions for medication that can be bought over the counter at relatively low cost, often for self-limiting or minor conditions, shows how important it is for us to work closer with patients to ensure the best possible value from NHS resources, whilst eliminating wastage and improving patient outcomes.

**In Bexley, between December 2015 and November 2016 we spent:**

- £621,972 on vitamins and supplements. The number of prescriptions for vitamins and supplements is also rising: by 15 per cent between December 2015 and November 2016, compared to the same period a year earlier.

- £7,282 on prescription lactose-free, soya-based and ‘stay-down’ infant formulas. The number of prescriptions for prescription infant formulas is also rising: by 26 per cent between December 2015 and November 2016, compared to the same period a year earlier.

- £450,090 on prescription gluten-free foods that could be saved. The number of prescriptions for gluten-free products is also rising: by six per cent between December 2015 and November 2016, compared to the same period a year earlier.
Have your say

We want to give as many people as possible the opportunity to have their say from Wednesday 21 June to Wednesday 2 August.

You can give your views by:

- Completing our survey, which is available on our website at www.bexleyccg.nhs.uk
- Completing a paper copy of the survey and returning it to us at the following address: NHS Bexley CCG, 2 Watling Street, Bexleyheath DA6 7AT
- Phoning us on 0800 3289712
- Attending one of our public engagement meetings: details on our website www.bexleyccg.nhs.uk
- If you are part of a local group and want us to come and talk to you about these proposals please email us: bexccg.contactus@nhs.net

After our engagement process finishes, we will consider all of the views we have heard. We expect to make a decision on our proposals at our governing body meeting, which members of the public are welcome to attend, on Thursday 28 September from 1.30 to 3.30pm at the civic offices in Bexleyheath.
The survey questions

Proposed changes to prescribing in Bexley
Survey questions

Please read the supporting leaflet before answering these questions. Please expand your answers onto a separate sheet if necessary.

Q1: How much do you agree with the CCG’s proposal to stop supporting the routine prescription of self-care medications for conditions that usually get better with time?

☐ Agree  ☐ Somewhat agree  ☐ Neither agree nor disagree  ☐ Disagree

Q2: How much do you agree with the statement: ‘GPs should spend less time treating people who could obtain self-care medication and health supplements from a pharmacy without a prescription’?

☐ Agree  ☐ Somewhat agree  ☐ Neither agree nor disagree  ☐ Disagree

Q3: How much do you agree with the CCG’s proposal to stop supporting the routine prescription of lactose-free, soya-based and stay-down (anti-reflux) baby milks?

☐ Agree  ☐ Somewhat agree  ☐ Neither agree nor disagree  ☐ Disagree

Q4: To what extent do you agree with the CCG’s proposal to stop supporting the routine prescription of gluten-free products?

☐ Agree  ☐ Somewhat agree  ☐ Neither agree nor disagree  ☐ Disagree

Q5: Are there any specific issues or concerns you have about these proposals?

Q6: Is there anything else that you think we have not considered?
Q5: Do you have any other suggestions about how we can make better use of our prescribing budget?

Q6: Do you have any other suggestions about how we can promote self-care of minor conditions in Bexley?

Q7: What kind of support do you think people might need to help them manage minor illnesses themselves or to get the right advice?

Knowing who has completed this survey will help us analyse responses more effectively. We don’t need personal details - just the information below. Many thanks

Are you filling in this survey as a:

- Bexley resident or patient
- Resident or patient in another borough
- Community organisation working with Bexley people
- Bexley patient council member or patient participation group representative
- NHS professional
- Other (please specify)
As part of our equality duty, we collect the following information to help us ensure we are getting views from a cross section of the population.

**Age:**

- □ Under 18
- □ 18 – 25
- □ 26 – 30
- □ 31 – 40
- □ 41 – 50
- □ 51 – 60
- □ 61 – 70
- □ 71 – 80
- □ 80+
- □ Prefer not to say

**Disability:**

- **Do you consider yourself to have a disability?**
  - □ Yes
  - □ No
  - □ Prefer not to say

  If ticked “Yes” to the above, please indicate your disability:

  - □ Learning disability/difficulty
  - □ Long-standing illness
  - □ Mental health condition
  - □ Not declared
  - □ Other
  - □ Physical impairment
  - □ Sensory impairment

**Race and ethnicity:**

- **What is your ethnic group?**

  - **A: White**
    - □ Welsh / English / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
    - □ Irish
    - □ Gypsy or Irish traveller
    - □ Any other white background (please write in)

  - **B: Mixed**
    - □ White and black Caribbean
    - □ White and black African
    - □ White and Asian
    - □ Any other mixed background (please write in)

  - **C: Asian or Asian British**
    - □ Indian
    - □ Pakistani
    - □ Bangladeshi
    - □ Chinese
    - □ Any other Asian background (please write in)

  - **D: Black or Black British**
    - □ Caribbean
    - □ African
    - □ Any other black background (please write in)

  - **E: Other ethnic group**
    - □ Arab
    - □ Any other, (please write in)
    - □ Prefer not to say
Sex:

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Intersex
- Prefer not to say

Gender reassignment:

Have you gone through any part of a process, or do you intend to bring your physical sex appearance, and/or your gender role, more in line with your gender identity? (This could include changing your name, your appearance and the way you dress, taking hormones or having gender confirming surgery)

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Marriage and civil partnership:

What is your legal marital or same-sex civil partnership status?

- Single
- Married
- Civil partnership
- Divorced/person whose civil partnership has been dissolved
- Widowed/surviving civil partner
- Separated
- Prefer not to say

Pregnancy and maternity:

Are you pregnant or have you given birth in the last 26 weeks?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Religion or belief:

What is your religion or belief?

- No religion
- Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Any other religion, (please write in)
- Prefer not to say

Sexual orientation:

Which of the following options best describes your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual / straight
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Other
- Prefer not to say
Contact us

If you want to find out more about how you can engage with the CCG or join our mystery shopper scheme, patient participation group network, patient council or other groups, please contact us using the details below.

NHS Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group
2 Watling Street,
Bexleyheath DA6 7AT

Telephone 0800 3289712
Email bexccg.contactus@nhs.net

Follow us on Twitter @NHSBexleyCCG
www.bexleyccg.nhs.uk