

Care homes – Homely remedies

Care home staff have a recognised duty of care to be able to respond to minor ailments/self-limiting conditions experienced by residents. A homely remedy is an over-the-counter (OTC) product for the short-term treatment of minor ailments such as indigestion, coughs, mild-to-moderate pain, constipation, and other minor and self-limiting conditions.

Key recommendations (for the full list, please refer to bulletin 335)

- Care homes should offer people treatment for minor ailments with homely remedies to give residents access to products that would commonly be available in a household. These treatments should be purchased OTC. Bulk prescribing is not a suitable way of obtaining homely remedies. A 'Homely Remedies Policy' should be in place within the care home to enable homely remedies to be used safely.
- Products prescribed or recommended for an individual resident must not be given to another resident as a homely remedy, nor should products purchased by a resident/their relative for their own personal use.
- Homely remedies should be stored in their original container with the patient information leaflet, in the same location as all other medication.
- Verbal consent to treatment should be obtained from the resident, where possible, prior to administering any homely remedies. All administered homely remedy doses must be recorded and indicated as a homely remedy on the patient's medication administration record (MAR) and any other medication records, in accordance with the care home's medicines policy.
- Homely remedies should be used for a limited period only, usually up to 48 hours. This time period should be detailed for each specified product in the 'Homely Remedies Policy'. Where a recommendation for a homely remedy is received from a healthcare professional (e.g. prescriber or pharmacist), the period of use should be ascertained and documented.
- Products requiring invasive administration (e.g. suppositories, external preparations that should not be shared between residents to avoid cross-contamination) should not be included as stock homely remedies. Also dressings, items for first aid, and vitamins and supplements should not be regarded as homely remedies.
- If the resident is under 16 years of age, their family or carers should also be given information and support to help the child or young person to make decisions about their treatment. Homely remedies used for children should be purchased for a named individual child and they should only be used by young people in a care home without a prescription with the approval of relevant social workers (as set out in children's Placement Plans).

National guidance

The NICE Social Care Guideline '[Managing Medicines in Care Homes](#)' includes recommendations regarding care home staff giving non-prescription and OTC products to residents.¹

In 2019, the National Care Forum published a '[Homely remedies guide: For local adaptation to fit within individual care home medication policies](#)'.² This guide includes flowcharts for symptoms including indigestion/heartburn, mild to moderate pain, dry cough, constipation, diarrhoea and certain skin problems.

In March 2018, NHS England produced guidance entitled '[Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs](#)'.³ Commonly used products for the treatment of the listed minor or self-limiting conditions may be appropriate for inclusion in a 'Homely Remedies Policy' and should be considered.

In 2023, the Care Quality Commission in England updated their guidance on 'OTC medicines and homely remedies', emphasising that care homes giving people access to OTC products and enabling them to choose is an issue of equality, and care homes should therefore make adjustments to support all people to access them.⁴

The All Wales Medicines Strategy Group have produced homely remedies resources, including an [example Homely Remedies Policy](#).⁵ No national guidance regarding homely remedies was identified in Scotland or Northern Ireland.

References

1. NICE. Managing medicines in care homes. Social care guideline [SC1]. Published March 2014. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/sc1>
2. National Care Forum. Safety of medicines in care homes. Homely remedies guide: For local adaptation to fit within individual care home medication policies. 2019. <https://www.nationalcareforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Homely-Remedies-guide.pdf>
3. NHS England. Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs. March 2018. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs/>
4. Care Quality Commission (CQC). Over the counter medicines and homely remedies. Last updated 20 March 2023. <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/treating-minor-ailments-promoting-self-care-adult-social-care>
5. The All Wales Medicines Strategy Group (AWMSG). Care Home Medicines Optimisation Toolkit. <https://awttc.nhs.wales/medicines-optimisation-and-safety/medicines-optimisation-guidance-resources-and-data/prescribing-guidance/care-home-medicines-optimisation-toolkit/> Accessed 12/09/23.

Additional resources available	Bulletin	https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-335-care-homes-homely-remedies/
	Tools	

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