

SHORTENED Content for practices to use for six common conditions this winter

Getting the right help and services

The winter months are always a busy time for GP Practices.

There may be another service or healthcare professional that you can see to give you the support you need without contacting the Practice. Find the right service for your needs at

<https://staywelldorset.nhs.uk/>

Everyone has an important role to prevent illness and minor issues like coughs and colds, sore throats, or ear infections can be easily treated at home with cheap medicines from your local pharmacy without needing an appointment or prescription.

Medicine cabinet essentials include:

- Pain relief (e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen)
- Cough or sore throat remedies
- First aid kit (plasters, bandages, antiseptic wipes)
- Oral rehydration salts
- Heartburn and indigestion treatment
- A thermometer

Stocking up on these essentials will not only help you feel better sooner and save you time, but also help the NHS save much needed resources.

1. Self-Care – Coughs

Coughs can often be managed at home without visiting the GP. You should rest and drink plenty of fluids to help ease your symptoms. Home remedies such as lemon and honey can also be helpful, while over-the-counter pain relief like paracetamol or ibuprofen may ease any discomfort. Your local pharmacist can advise you.

Most coughs are harmless and will go away on their own, but if your cough lasts for more than three weeks, contains blood, or you have trouble breathing, we recommend that you contact your local GP Practice.

2. Self-Care – Colds

To speed up your recovery, we recommend staying hydrated and getting plenty of rest. Additionally, you can purchase over-the-counter cold medicines like painkillers and decongestants from a pharmacy or supermarket to relieve your symptoms.

Most colds last between 1-2 weeks and typically resolve on their own. However, if your symptoms suddenly worsen, persist for more than three weeks, or you develop a high temperature above 39°C, please contact your local GP Practice.

3. Self-Care – Sore Throat

Adults can soothe a sore throat by gargling warm salt water and sucking on ice cubes or hard sweets. For children, ice lollies are a safer option than small items that could cause choking. You can speed up the recovery process by staying hydrated and getting enough rest. Your local pharmacist can advise you on over-the-counter medicines to help alleviate any pain and discomfort.

Sore throats typically clear up within a week. If your symptoms persist beyond a week or you often get sore throats, we recommend contacting your local GP Practice.

4. Self-Care – Ear Infection

You can manage the pain and discomfort with over-the-counter painkillers like paracetamol or ibuprofen, or by using a warm or cold flannel on the ear. Antibiotics are **not** recommended for ear infections as they don't alleviate symptoms and the infection should clear up by itself within 3-7 days.

Ear infections are generally harmless and can be easily treated at home. However, if the earache persists beyond 3 days, or you experience frequent ear infections, we recommend that you contact your local GP Practice.

5. Self-Care – Sinusitis

When managing sinusitis at home, we suggest getting lots of rest, drinking plenty of fluids and taking over-the-counter painkillers for any pain or fever. Additionally, visit your local pharmacist for expert advice or other ways to manage your symptoms, such as using saltwater solutions or nasal sprays to clean your nose.

Although sinusitis can be easily managed at home, we advise you to contact your local GP Practice if your symptoms worsen, do not improve after a week or you experience recurring sinusitis.

6. Self-Care – Conjunctivitis

This is an inflammation of the eye either caused by infection or an allergy. It usually clears with bathing the eye with cooled boiled water within 7-10 days. If however the eye remains sticky with discharge antibiotic drops can be bought for anyone aged over 2 from your chemist. If it is an allergy, then symptoms can also be eased by over-the-counter allergy drops.

SELF-CARE

Looking after yourself to improve/maintain health

WHEN TO USE SELF-CARE...

MINOR ILLNESSES	MINOR INJURIES	RECOVER WITH
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Cold● Flu● Indigestion● Back pain● Headaches● Skin complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Muscle pulls● Strains● Back pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Rest● Fluids● Medication● Good diet● Exercise● Stop smoking● Less alcohol● Hot/cold compression● Bandages