



Pharmacy First – getting the most from your pharmacist

Peer reviewed by Sima Jassal, MPharm

Last updated by **Lawrence Higgins**

Last updated 24 Sept 2024



It's World Pharmacy Day and we explain when you can visit a pharmacist to receive advice and treatment for some simple illnesses, instead of going to see your doctor. Read here about the NHS Pharmacy First scheme, what conditions you can go directly to your pharmacist about, and what else you need to do.

In this article:

- > **What is Pharmacy First?**
- > **What conditions can you see your pharmacist about?**
- > **How to see your pharmacist**

- > **What will happen at your pharmacist appointment**
- > **What else can you see a pharmacist about**

What is Pharmacy First?

The Pharmacy First scheme means you can go and see a pharmacist about several minor illnesses and conditions you would previously have had to see your GP about. You can visit your pharmacist for a consultation and they will treat you and prescribe medicines if necessary. If your condition is more serious you will be referred to a GP or hospital.

Your pharmacist will assess you suitably for treating you and may refer you to another health service if they feel it's more appropriate.

Patient picks for Medicine information



Treatment and medication

How does paracetamol know where our pain is?

Paracetamol is a miracle worker for many of us. We take it for headaches, toothache and sickness. It can treat raised temperatures and is also an ingredient in a variety of cold and flu medications. But, how does it work exactly? How can one tablet treat such a variety of...

by Emily Jane Bashforth



Treatment and medication

Aspirin and other antiplatelet medicines

Most people who have a cardiovascular disease (for example, angina, peripheral arterial disease, or a previous heart attack, transient ischaemic attack (TIA) or stroke) take a low-dose aspirin (75 mg) each day or clopidogrel (75 mg) each day. This reduces the risk of...

by Dr Toni Hazell

What conditions can you see your pharmacist about?

Under Pharmacy First, pharmacists can treat and prescribe medicines for seven conditions. These are the conditions, and at what age, you can see the pharmacist about:

Earache - 1 to 17 years.

Impetigo - 1 year and over.

Infected **insect bites** - 1 year and over.

Shingles - 18 years and over.

Sinusitis - 12 years and over.

Sore throat - 5 years and over.

Uncomplicated **urinary tract infections** - women 16-64 years.

Anyone not within these age ranges should see their GP.

There are many other conditions which you can also see your pharmacist about rather than your doctor. These include:

Aches and pains – such as, back pain, headache and period pain.

Accidents – such as, sprains, minor cuts, and grazes

Colds, flu and other infections – such as, **cough**, congestion, **fevers** and/or temperature.

Ear care – such as, ear wax.

Eye care – such as, **conjunctivitis**, styes.

Hay fever – which is not controlled by standard over-the-counter treatments.

Rashes.

Skin problems – such as, athlete's foot, cold sores, or mild **eczema** or **psoriasis**.

Stomach aches – such as, **constipation**, **diarrhoea**, or indigestion.

How to see your pharmacist

More than 10,000 pharmacies across the UK are part of the scheme – that's more than 9 out of every 10. Generally, you can just walk in to your closest or preferred one and ask for an appointment – or they will see you straightaway if there is availability. If you'd prefer, you can call and ask for a video consultation with the pharmacist.

You may also be referred to a pharmacy appointment from:

NHS 111 – online, telephone and the NHS App.

Integrated urgent care clinical assessment services.

Urgent treatment centres.

A&E.

999.

Your GP.

To find out your nearest pharmacy and check if it is part of the scheme go to **NHS pharmacy finder** or just walk in.

What will happen at your pharmacist appointment

Your consultation with the pharmacist will always be confidential and in a private place. The pharmacist will ask you questions about your health – they may need to know about your previous medical history, any allergies, any medicines you are taking, and the symptoms you are experiencing. They will ask you before checking any medical records.

For some conditions, the pharmacist may ask to have a look at what is wrong – for instance, if you have an earache, they may use an otoscope to look into your ear. The pharmacist will not use diagnostic tests to check for specific conditions – such as checking a pee sample for a UTI or swabbing your sore throat.

The pharmacist will recommend the best course of action to treat your condition – this could be that your illness is best to run its course, they may prescribe medication such as antibiotics. If your condition is more severe they may refer you to another health service or professional.

The notes of your consultation will be added to your medical records.

What else can you see a pharmacist about

As well as the conditions covered under Pharmacy First and other minor illnesses, there are many other issues and topics your pharmacist will be able to help you with, these include:

Advice on using and disposing of **medicines**.

Contraception.

Blood pressure checks.

Chlamydia screening and treatment.

Quitting smoking.

Cholesterol and blood sugar testing.

Drug use – including needle and syringe exchange schemes.

Help on how to **manage your weight**.

Some vaccinations.

If your symptoms last for more than two weeks or do not get better you should see a GP. If your symptoms are severe and you are worried, call 999 or go to your local A&E.

Article history

The information on this page is peer reviewed by qualified clinicians.

Next review due: 24 Sept 2027

24 Sept 2024 | Latest version

Last updated by

Lawrence Higgins

Peer reviewed by

Sima Jassal, MPharm

31 Jan 2024 | Originally published

Authored by:

Lawrence Higgins

Are you protected against flu?

See if you are eligible for a free NHS flu jab today.

[Check now](#)

Feeling unwell?

Assess your symptoms online with our free symptom checker

[Check symptoms](#)

Download the Patient Access app



Follow us



Patient

[About us](#)

[Advertise with us](#)

[Contact us](#)

Legal

[Accessibility statement](#)

[Cookie policy](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

[Terms of use](#)

[Editorial policy](#)

[Authors](#)

Our clinical information meets the standards set by the NHS in their Standard for Creating Health Content guidance. [Read our editorial policy.](#)

Patient is a part of

© 2024 Egton Medical Information Systems Limited. All rights reserved.

Registered number: 02117205 Registered office: Fulford Grange, Micklefield Lane, Rawdon, Leeds, LS19 6BA.

Patient is a UK registered trade mark.

Patient does not provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

